The South African place in fantasies of recovery and the sublime

by

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the depiction of South African inspired places within the aesthetic of the fantastic utilizing a theoretical toolkit enabled by criticism of the marvellous fantasy subgenre. In my study, I consider the marvellous subgenre not as an arbitrary grouping but more holistically as an aesthetic approach entailing narrative structures and rhetorical strategies that enable the depiction of desirable places evocative of a specific mood and quality. This kind of desirability, I argue, is characterised by an enchanting sublime mode designed to awe and enthrall without alienating. The aim of my investigation is to shed light on a spectrum of questions revolving around the status and curious absence of the marvellous aesthetic in South African fiction and fantastic literature in general, centred specifically on the depiction of place. Are such depictions capable of inspiring wonder and recovery in the mode of the sublime?

The selection of texts analysed in this study has been based on the questions each one opens up about depictions of desirable South African inspired places in fiction making use of the fantastic. In an analysis of H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), I trace the marvellous subgenre to its roots within the imperial romance, which left on the subgenre traces of imperialist rhetoric that are intrinsically antithetical to postcolonialist sensibilities. *The Heart of Redness* (2000), a magical realist work by Zakes Mda, implicitly interrogates the binaries underlying the marvellous aesthetic whilst simultaneously enabling enchantment in the service of national healing. *The Hidden Star* (2006) by Sello Duiker is a children's novel and reflects the important role that children's literature has performed within the marvellous subgenre, yet it also indicates an unexpected but telling affinity with horror fantasy. Under the revealing lens of a theoretical frame that juxtaposes marvellous fantasy

criticism with magical realist thinking, I explore the unique challenges involved in the depictions of South Africa as a place of enchantment.

Key Words

Fantasy; marvellous literature; South African literature; space; sublime; postcolonialism; imperial romance; magical realism; children's literature; J.R.R. Tolkien; H.R. Haggard; Zakes Mda; Sello Duiker.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Recovery, the Sublime and Fantasies of South Africa

In his essay 'On Fairy-Stories', J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), makes two arguments regarding the definition and success of fantasy. Firstly, he argues that the definition of fantasy is determined by the quality of its depiction of place, what he calls 'the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:10). Secondly, he argues that fantasy is 'not primarily concerned with possibility, but with desirability; the success of a work of fantasy is dependent on the extent to which it awakens desire, 'satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:41). It is thus the ability to evoke desirable place that Tolkien's essay emphasises as crucial to the success of fantasy literature.

In this thesis, I investigate the notion of fantasy as a means of endowing a depiction of place with desirability within the specific area of South African fantastic fiction. I am intrigued by Tolkien's conceptualisation of fantasy as defined by its evocation of desirable place, and fascinated by the possibility of a South African work of fantasy fulfilling such a function. As an avid reader of fantasy fiction, Tolkien's observation regarding the desirability of place resonates with my own experience of works like *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 2005 [1954-1955]) that effectively endow European landscapes and medieval culture with great appeal. My personal experience of South African space has likewise been deeply positive and the potential of the South African setting to generate such appeal seems very clear to me. Yet, I have never come across a fantasy version of my country capable of evoking this kind of appeal in quite the same way. But what does this mean, exactly? Could these questions be

chalked up to subjective taste, a question of skill, or is there some divergence in the area of aesthetic structure to be explored?

The fantastic certainly has a presence in South African fiction, as the extensive study in South African fantastic fictions by Felicity Wood (2001) shows us. Also, it would be a bold generalisation to say that South African literature is completely lacking in descriptions of beautiful landscapes and moments of joyous experience of the country. Yet, these books are not quite what I find myself looking for nor anything near what Tolkien meant. There is something quite specific about the sort of fantasy fiction involved in Tolkien's observation, and thus something highly intriguing about the questions being raised relating to the lacuna I sense. Firstly, the value of the study seems strengthened by my sense that Tolkien's conceptualisation is not applicable to all or even most fantasy literature, and by a deep-seated suspicion that no South African fantasy in Tolkien's mould exists at all. This is a study richer in questions than answers, but they are questions that I believe suggest a potentially rewarding approach to the uses of the fantastic in South African fiction and fantasy literature in general.

The fantastic itself is a category designating otherness. Rosemary Jackson (1981: 53) writes:

> In its broadest sense, fantastic literature has always been concerned with revealing and exploring the interrelations of the 'I' and the 'not-I', of self and other. Within a supernatural economy, or a magical thought mode, otherness is designated as otherworldly, supernatural, as being above, or outside, the human…

Thus, in the context of postcolonial theory, Tolkien's insistence on the significance of place as an essential determinant in our response to the fantastic acquires an unexpected resonance. As Viljoen, Lewis and van der Merwe (2004:3) remind us:

> …space in literature as in life is never just an empty, neutral extension but much rather a place that has been named, demarcated, allocated. It is a place that gets its meaning from human experience and memories and from relations between people. It is often a stage where human desires and interests clash.

In her examination of the 'ideological and political meaning of place and spatial relations' in South African literature, Rita Barnard (2007:5) observes that in recent decades, 'literary critics and theorists have increasingly turned to spatial metaphors ("exploration," "decentering," "mapping," and so forth) to describe their methodologies and there has been a marked interest in a whole array of theoretical concepts that are fundamentally spatial or geographic…' Furthermore, she contends, this emphasis on the spatial in critical theory 'has been especially important in the study of imperialism, colonial discourse, and postcolonial theory' because 'the discipline of geography itself—is scarcely separable from the imperial project'. She goes on to cite seminal postcolonial theorist Edward Said, observing that history 'always *takes place*, as Said suggests, and nowhere is the question of land, of territory and power, as pertinent and contested as in the long and continuing history of imperialism' (Barnard, 2007:5).

Said's term 'imaginative geographies', appearing in the vastly influential study *Orientalism* (2003 [1976]), suggests intriguing political implications for the imagined geographies of fantasy worlds. In *Orientalism*, Said suggests that the imagining of cultural and racial otherness as an inferior category is figured in spatial terms:

> ...the universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I used the word 'arbitrary' here because imaginative geography of the 'our land-barbarian land' variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for 'us' to set up these boundaries in our minds; 'they' become 'they accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from 'ours' (Said, 2003:54).

Similarly, Tolkien ([1965] 2001:41) contends that the fantastic, 'the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds', must be spatially displaced from the real. Furthermore, the effect of enchantment is dependent on the fantasy's skilled rendering of a sense of distance. Racial or cultural otherness, in the fantastic narrative, must always be considered in relation to this other 'other' as the familiar and the strange are never to be taken for granted in the storyscapes of fantasy. More significant, however, is that the imaginary worlds of fantasy enact Said's notion of imaginative geography on a literal level, foregrounding the imagining of space entailed in the conceptualization of otherness. This is especially true for fantastic texts which attempt to represent cultural or racial 'others' and position them as such. With that in mind, the study of such representations of space within fantastic narratives produced in South African works always needs to tussle with othering of this kind. The way certain texts engage with Said's complexities, whether resisting othering or replicating its patterns, thus merits attention.

Furthermore, an argument might be made that representations of the South African space in fantastic narratives are particularly significant. Rita Barnard (2007:5) argues that apartheid, though not unconnected to global developments of imperialism and colonialism, 'clearly represents an extreme and therefore starkly illuminating instance of the territorialisation of power.' She (2007:6) contends:

> All the essential political features of South Africa's 'pigmentocratic industrialized state' were fundamentally space-dependent: the classification of the population into distinct racial-categories, the segregation of residential areas on the basis of race, the restriction of black urbanization, the system of migrant labor from rural areas to the towns, the emphasis on ethnicity and traditionalism, and the formidable apparatus of state surveillance and control. Of all these features, there is not a single one that did not, in practice, rely on the power of space to separate individuals from each other, to direct and control their movements, and to reinforce social distinctions.

This is not, however, to suggest that this study focuses on literary representations of apartheid formulations of space, but to point out that the history of space configuration in South Africa highlights a certain degree of specificity that renders a focus on South African literature for this kind of study more than an arbitrary one. Broadening the scope of this study to other locales (i.e. what is the status of marvellous fantasy in North Africa, Australia or New Zealand) might have further contextualised the subject, but to do so in a balanced way would have required an analysis of a fully representative sample of fantasy in every other country considered, an exploration of the history of the country in terms of literature, relationship to place and politics and a comparative analysis of these texts with South African ones. It has therefore seemed necessary to narrow down the focus to South Africa in the interests of space and simplicity thereby also investigating at a depth that a sufficiently narrowed focus enables.

There are other considerations to be made. In this vein, I again refer to Rita Barnard's study, which commences with the valuable observation that while there is:

> …a danger in of overemphasising the exceptionality of apartheid—of regarding South Africa as a 'world apart'—there is also…a danger in abandoning a specificity of its history, its geography, and its literary traditions in favor of more glamorous abstractions like 'colonial space' (Barnard, 1997:8).

While Barnard acknowledges that important themes connect postcolonial criticism in its various forms to studies of space in South Africa, she (1997:8) points out that in a sense, South Africa during the apartheid years was neither truly colonial nor postcolonial: 'For the Afrikaner minority, the country's postcolonial status was, in a sense, a *fait accompli*; they had been in control of an independent republic since 1961. This was not true for the black majority.' There are important reasons, therefore, for distinguishing between apartheid and colonial, and postapartheid and postcolonial eras, in the study of South African literatures. In their account of the history of South African literatures in English after 1945, Cornwell,

Klopper, and Mackenzie (2010:5) likewise argue that 'South Africa today is neither a colonial nor postcolonial polity' and add the suggestive notion, drawn from the studies of Robert Thornton, that South Africa should instead be considered as a 'postmodern' polity:

> Although Thornton is speaking in the first instance about political 'settlements' of social difference, anyone familiar with the kaleidoscopic and often bizarre collage of styles, identifications, traditions, and practices that constitute contemporary South African culture will recognize the unmistakable stamp of the postmodern.

This idea is worth keeping in mind as the implication is that productions of the South African fantastic often tend to represent spaces as bizarre and kaleidoscopic. These spaces may startle and disorient, but are they desirable?

To get to the bottom of these questions, I will firstly need to look intensively and extensively into the specificities of Tolkien's argument, his understanding of fantasy and desirability and why Tolkien's argument, when looked at closely, seems largely at odds with the forms the fantastic has taken in South African fiction. In exploring the latter, I will be drawing heavily on Felicity Wood's 2001 doctoral thesis on the value and history of the fantastic in South African English fiction, the most incisive work on the subject to date. Specifically, I will be drawing attention to the striking divergences between Wood's conclusions about fantasy in South Africa and Tolkien's essay on fantasy, divergences which occur, intriguingly, even when Wood uses terms directly from Tolkien's criticism. This emphasis on divergence in form, I hope, will clarify at the outset that the lacuna under study has nothing to do with a failure of skill, but with the absence of an identifiable aesthetic structure, a subgenre. I will explore the wider significance of Tolkien's ideas and the way they have crucially informed an entire subgenre of immense global popularity. Lastly, I will formulate a toolkit for the analysis of selected fantastic narratives depicting a South African setting specifically for the purpose of exploring aesthetic divergences relating to the depiction of desirable place.

Gerald Gaylard (2005:45), in his study on African magical realism, observes that 'it is rare to find a fully marvellous work of fantasy in African postcolonialism; there is no text that does not overtly refer to everyday reality in this genre; there is no *The Lord of the Rings*'. In Gaylard's remark, we are getting closer to the specificity referred to above. Is there something specific about *The Lord of the Rings* and fantasies like it that perform the function to which Tolkien refers, that nameless something I was seeking? Is the answer to be found in the other term Gaylard uses, marvellous fantasy, presumably referring to the fantasies 'like *The Lord of the Rings*'. Finally, to get to the question at the heart of my study: is there something in the aesthetic structure of such fantasies that relates to this function?

On the one hand, one might argue that no recipe for aesthetic success exists to guarantee any emotional response in readers. One can argue further that *The Lord of the Rings,* like any successful artwork, cannot be broken down to its structural components in order to arrive at such a recipe. Seen in this sense, there is no fantasy *like* Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* anywhere in literature in the same way there are no works *like* any successful artwork; successful artworks are unique and more than the sum of their parts. Therefore, when one speaks of the effects of a work of literature in terms of aesthetic structure, such effects can only be meant in terms of the *potential* of such works to create certain effects; the skill of the author will still ultimately determine the result. On the other hand, it is highly significant that in South African literature the lacuna lies not in a failure of skill; there is no teeming proliferation of literature using the fantastic in South African fiction that resembles, even on the shallow level of structural makeup, a work like *The Lord of the Rings* containing aesthetic shortcomings one may analyse. The absence concerns genre, not skill, and is interesting for reasons in itself.

The significance of genre emerges in the unpacking of the terms used and assumptions made in Gaylard's statement. What is a fully marvellous fantasy? Why is J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* used as an example of a 'fully marvellous fantasy'? Is such a fantasy rare in South African literature or is it utterly absent? If such South African fantasies exist, how are they recognisable as marvellous fantasies? How are they distinct from other marvellous fantasies? If such distinctions exist, what are the terms by which we identify such fantasies, and why is there a different set of terms at all? These questions seem inextricably bound up with the idea that a central use of fantasy is to depict desirable places as characterised by Tolkien. Specifically, they are questions implicated within the idea that the function of fantasy is to endow space with wonder. Farah Mendlesohn (2008:xiii) argues that the

> fantastic is an area of literature that is heavily dependent on the dialectic between author and reader for the construction of a sense of wonder, that it is a fiction of consensual construction of belief. This expectation is historical, subject to historical change, and is not unique to fantasy…This dialectic is conditioned by the very real genre expectations circling around…identifiable rhetorical techniques…

Genres can seem like arbitrary groupings, generated in no small measure by marketing forces. However, an important aspect of this study is to argue that genres are in some ways important in what they indicate about expectations set up by certain kinds of story-telling and on a deeper level, assumptions rooted in specific perspectives on stories, values and even reality itself. The absence of a grouping of fiction conforming to certain expectations and assumptions within one locale, while it flourishes in another, is at the very least interesting for this reason.

The relevance of genre also acquires a deeper pertinence in the light of Recovery, a function ascribed by Tolkien to the fantasy-space that has very specific aesthetic prerequisites. Recovery, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:57-58) explains, is the 'regaining of a clear view...so that the

things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity...' This function is enabled by the fantastic elements of fantasy fiction, which have their place in a realm populated by both the ordinary and the magical. According to Tolkien ([1964] 2001:57), such fantasy elements are not valuable for the strangeness they possess in themselves, but for their ability to endow the familiar and ordinary with the light and newness of wonder, enabling us to 'meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses – and wolves'. Good fantasy, according to Tolkien, actually deals 'largely…with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting; this enables us to recover 'the wonder of the things, such as stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:59-60).

In her thesis on South African fantastic fiction, Felicity Wood refers to Tolkien's concept of Recovery in her argument for the value of the fantastic in South African fiction in English. Wood (2001:8) begins by clarifying that, while the use of realism in literature does not necessarily entail inferior writing, for a number of reasons, 'the type of realism espoused by many South African writers in English...has tended to represent a highly unrealistic—that is, artistically unconvincing—form of realism as a result of the simplified, conventionalised versions of reality that it frequently espoused'. Wood's thesis then continues to argue that this is probably one reason for the number of unfortunate tendencies she identifies in South African English fiction: its creative constriction, imaginative aridity, and oppressive sense of enclosure from possibility. Recovery, she suggests, is a possible way in which fantasy can allow South African writers to escape the pattern of creative constriction that has so determined the way realism has been employed as a mode in English South African literature as a whole. 'The danger,' Wood (2001:58) argues, of:

> ...simplified versions of the real is that they can imprison us, intellectually, imaginatively and psychologically. Fantasy, on the other hand, can offer us release. Tolkien...emphasises this aspect of the fantastic when he describes the effect of Recovery...which enables us to view the familiar from original, unexpected perspectives...

Yet Recovery, which is one component inextricably interlaced in a complex, conceptualization of fantasy that is in many ways specific to Tolkien, seems at odds with the role envisioned for fantasy literature in South African fiction by Wood. Concerned primarily with the limitations imposed by a rigid adherence to realism, Wood (2001:38) looks to the fantastic as a previously overlooked and potentially valuable alternative way of engaging with South African reality. Wood thus argues for the potential in the fantastic to enable that which has evaded South African practitioners of the realist mode in English: the opening up of new creative spaces and the willingness to embrace the pleasure, laughter and imaginative play inherent in fantasy's openness to areas previously undervalued, if not entirely absent, in South African English fiction. The potential for imaginative liberation is the predominant value of fantasy in Wood's argument, reiterated in her references to release, freeing up and the openness to alternative perspectives. Wood thus posits fantasy as a counter to the tendency of imaginative imprisonment, enclosure and the shutting down of possibilities. This value Wood identifies in Recovery, which enables new perspectives. However, by defining Recovery in this way, Wood is adhering to Tolkien's conceptualization of the term only in its most loosely applicable sense. Recovery, as I will show, is not simply operative within any manifestation of the fantastic but is enabled specifically by the rhetorical prerequisites of Tolkien's paradigm.

Recovery, as I hope to demonstrate, is a concept essentially dependent on other operations embedded within a specific fantasy framework. However, in her thesis, Wood (2001) discusses as enablers of Recovery a selection of authors, including Ivan Vladislavic,

Christopher Hope and André Brink, whose use of the fantastic differs from Tolkien's conceptualization in crucial ways. These differences have significant implications for the possibility of Recovery in South African fantastic fiction.

Firstly, as Wood herself (2001:66) notes: 'Neither Hope, Vladislavic nor Brink are primarily Fantasy writers. Instead they make use of fantastic elements in their work.' While Tolkien ([1964] 2001:57) acknowledges that the '"fantastic" elements in verse and prose of other kinds, even when only decorative or occasional' assist in the refreshing of perspective enabled by Recovery, he also insists that no kind of story enables Recovery in its full meaning so much as 'a fairy story, a thing built on or about Fantasy, of which Fantasy is the core' ([1964] 2001:59). Secondly, and this is much more markedly a departure from Tolkien's conceptualization of fantasy, and therefore Recovery, Wood (2001:66) bases her defence on the idea of the 'fantastic's ability to exist as a disruptive, challenging presence, within other types of writing'. Though the process of Recovery as conceptualized by Tolkien is transformative, it is not a source of unease or alienation as it sometimes is in the fantastic works of the authors Wood discusses. Furthermore, Tolkien posits the fantastic as a distinct category, and suggests that it is only because the fantastic is understood to be distinct from the real that it is able to illuminate the ordinary, and thus, to enable Recovery. Fantasy, says Tolkien ([1964] 2001:55), 'is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact, but not a slavery to it'. In contrast, Wood (2001:54) describes her chosen South African fantastic fictions in this way:

> Through the way in which it is integrated into reality, the fantastic makes the 'real' world seem 'unreal', astounding, unpredictable and unfamiliar...reality slips in and out of fantasy in the work of writers such as Christopher Hope, Ivan Vladislavic and Brink, and it becomes hard to separate the one from the other.

Based on the above, it seems that Recovery in Tolkien's sense is only partly applicable to the context in which Wood employs it, a discrepancy that seems to have its roots in the fundamentally different definitions that these two theorists attach to fantasy. And the differences extend much deeper than may initially appear.

The ideas about fantasy described in Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories', adapted from his 1938 lecture (Swinfen, 1984:4), find their fullest expression in his own fantasy stories, the children's book *The Hobbit* (1937) and the adult fantasy that grew out of it, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955). 'On Fairy-Stories' is an essay that is essentially concerned with the value and origin of fairy tales. The term 'fairy-stories' is suggestive of Tolkien's understanding of fantasy, and he defines fairy-stories in carefully argued terms. While Wood (2001:52) acknowledges the specificity of Tolkien's subject, remarking that like many fantasy theorists Tolkien limits his definition of fantasy to a sub-genre (i.e. fairy-tales) at the cost of considering the fantastic in its many manifestations, she does not consider how the possibility of Recovery may be tied specifically to this subgenre. It is essential to understand how fairy tales and fantasy are connected in Tolkien's essay in order to grasp Tolkien's explanation of how Recovery operates.

In Tolkien's criticism, the term 'fairy-stories' is interchangeable with folk-tales, which Tolkien ([1964] 2001:23-24) argues are a more nearly perfected, rather than inferior, species of myth:

> At one time it was a dominant view that all such matter was derived from 'nature-myths'. The Olympians were *personifications* of the sun, of dawn, of night, and so on, and all the stories told about them were *myths* (*allegories* would have been a better word) of the greater elemental changes and processes of nature. Epic, heroic legend, saga, then localised these stories in real places and humanised them by attributing them to ancestral heroes, mightier than men and yet already men. And finally these legends, dwindling down, became folk-tales...fairy-stories – nursery tales.

This, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:24). continues, would seem to be 'the truth almost upside down', since 'the nearer the so-called "nature-myth", or allegory of the large processes of nature, is to its supposed archetype, the less interesting it is, and indeed the less is it of a myth capable of throwing any illumination whatever on the world'. Mythology of this kind, in Tolkien's view, becomes more valuable, difficult and sophisticated the closer to fairy-story it is, that is, the more it is characterised by the aspect of Sub-creation, 'rather than either representation or symbolic interpretation of the beauties and terrors of the world' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:23). Recovery is dependent upon Sub-creation, and Sub-creation needs to be considered in more detail as it is essential to understanding Recovery.

Sub-creation, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:47) explains, is 'the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of "fantasy"'. It takes place at a point removed from the conception of allegory, and is the moment when 'new form is made' in the imagination as a result of the simultaneous observance of and release from observed fact:

> The human mind, endowed with the powers of generalisation and abstraction, sees not only *green-grass*, discriminating it from other things...but seeing that it is *green* as well as being *grass*...[But] the mind that thought of *light*, *heavy*, *grey*, *yellow*, *still*, *swift*, also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water...in such 'fantasy', as it is called...Faerie begins: Man becomes a sub-creator (Tolkien [1964] 2001:22-23).

At a glance, it seems that it is this release from the restraints of fact in the moment of Sub-creation that Wood (1991:33) alludes to when she states that fantasy, unlike much South African literature, 'is undisciplined and does away with restraints and conventions and is often about creating the world—or certain aspects of it anew' as when she writes that Recovery enables the release from stale perspectives. What Wood (1991:33) is referring to here is the inherent potential in the alternative visions of reality within fantasy to express a

'dissatisfaction with the way things are viewed or the way they're interpreted,' and its ability to view 'things in a different way or [explore] them from a new angle'. Therefore, when Wood (2001:5) asserts that the fantastic is a mode that tends to be 'highly complicated and artistically demanding...', she is in agreement with Tolkien ([1964] 2001:23), who states clearly that in the moment of the release from observed fact, fantasy only 'begins', and that the quality of fantasy capable of enabling Recovery is one that requires both discipline and skill to achieve. However, Wood and Tolkien differ radically in their visions of the kind of fantasy that can be achieved with such skill. And for Tolkien Recovery is interlinked with other operations just as intrinsic to his idea of fantasy as freedom from observed fact, operations that are precluded by Wood's vision.

Tolkien ([1964] 2001:47) uses fantasy to describe 'both the Sub-creative Art...and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story'. This strangeness refers to the 'derived notions of "unreality",' that is, 'of freedom from the domination of observed "fact", in short of the fantastic.' Tolkien ([1964] 2001:47-48) thus affirms 'the etymological and semantic connections of *fantasy* with *fantastic*: with images of things that are not only "not actually present", but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there'. This strict demarcation of the fantastic is not so much disregarded by Wood in her thesis as it is partially misapplied when she links Recovery to a kind of fantasy chiefly characterised, as she says, by its 'indeterminacy', its ability to make reality itself disorienting and 'unreal' (Wood, 2001:54). The effect of Recovery, as envisioned by Tolkien, however, is *not* disorientation, but its opposite, Enchantment. And this effect depends on the *stability* of categories, of the distinctness of the real and unreal, though they are no less necessarily in a constant state of intermingling.

Enchantment, for Tolkien, is determined by the quality of sub-creation. In his description of how the reader engages with the fantastic aspects of a fantasy story, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:37) rejects Samuel Coleridge's term 'willing suspension of disbelief' and instead posits the operation of 'Secondary Belief'. 'What really happens,' Tolkien ([1964] 2001:37-38) argues, 'is that the story-maker proves a successful sub-creator. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, "inside"'. Enchantment is therefore dependent on the artistic skill which enables the reader's acceptance of the fantastic *as a story*. The realism reader's equivalent to Secondary Belief is literary belief, a term also used by Tolkien, which results in the enjoyment experienced due to the artistic consistency and quality of a story.

'Enchantment,' Tolkien ([1964] 2001:53) says, 'produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose...'. However, unlike realist writers, makers of fantasy face an added challenge as they work to weave the fantastic seamlessly into their art. According to Tolkien ([1964] 2001:49):

> Anyone inheriting the fantastic device of human language can say *the green sun*. Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough...To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft...when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed, narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode.

When fantasy is achieved, however, with all the skill that story-telling art can contrive, it gives rise to enchantment. The effect of enchantment, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:14) argues, is not disorientation, but wonder, which he also calls the 'primal desire at the heart of Faerie'. In Tolkien's view, this connection to desire, in its particular form, is the chief pleasure of

fantasy literature, and pleasure in this sense becomes both fantasy's characterising feature and the source of its power.

In her thesis on the value of the fantastic in South African English literature, Wood (2001:63) is keen to demonstrate that 'pleasure plays a central part in the nature and effect of the fantastic. To diminish its role,' she (2001:63) argues, 'or leave it out of the equation is to deprive the fantastic of a great deal of its force'. However, it is interesting to note the different ways in which Wood and Tolkien characterise the pleasure-value of the fantastic. For Wood (2001:63), pleasure inheres in the potential in fantasy for imaginative play and humour, and thus its ability to 'free' South African literature from the 'fears, constraints, the self-righteousness as well as the stiflingly reverential attitudes for certain figures, hallowed South African icons and historical events that mark or mar much fiction in English'. In this regard, Wood's conceptualization of the fantastic is embodied in Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, which describes the overturning of established order:

> In his discussion of Rabelaisian laughter (which is rooted in folklore and expresses qualities of the carnival), Bakhtin observes that not only does such laughter destabilise established structures and systems of control but it also brings together that which has been traditionally separated and disunited (Wood, 2001:65).

This leads Wood, once again, to look to that mode of fantasy characterised by inter-disruptive energies, wherein the real and fantastic tend to bleed into and destabilize each other. In contrast, Tolkien makes clear that the desire engendered by fantasy is in part defined by the understanding established between reader and story of the impermeable nature of these categories. In 'On Fairy-stories', he explains the appeal of dragons, a manifestation of the fantastic within a fantasy tale, in the following way:

> I never imagined that the dragon was the same order as the horse. And that was not because I saw horses daily, but never even the footprint of a worm. The dragon had the trademark Of Faerie written plain upon him. In whatever world he had his being, it was an Other-world. Fantasy, the

> making or glimpsing of Other-worlds, was the heart of the desire of Faerie…I desired dragons with a profound desire. Of course, I in my timid body, did not wish to have them in my neighbourhood, intruding into my relatively safe world, in which it was, for instance, possible to read stories in peace of mind, free from fear... (Tolkien [1964] 2001:41-42).

The essential difference between Wood and Tolkien's ideas of what makes fantasy pleasurable should be clear from this example. For Tolkien, the enjoyment of dragons is derived from the skilled literary evocation of the dragon's otherworldly properties, and for the 'glimpse' it thereby yields of the fully realized sense of that which is understood to be beyond the possible. In this way, Tolkien envisions fantasy as evoking the thrill of the transcendent without the threat of dislocation.

Wood's emphasis on irreverence and humour as the source of pleasure in the fantastic also departs from Tolkien's notion of pleasure. Tolkien's conceptualisation of fantasy certainly makes room for laughter and even irreverence in its function as satire, one of the three faces of fairy stories he identifies in his essay being the 'mirror of scorn and pity towards man' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:26-27). But the highest function of fantasy, for Tolkien, is the 'Consolation of the Happy Ending', which Tolkien ([1964] 2001:69) describes as deeply serious and inspiring of awe rather than irreverence: 'Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief...Far more powerful and poignant is the effect in a serious tale of Faerie' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:70). On this, the solemnity of joy at the farthest pole from humour and playfulness, Wood is silent, as she is on the primal desires that Tolkien ([1964] 2001:13) identifies as being central to the pleasure of the fantastic, 'to survey the depths of space and time [and]...to hold communion with other living things.' But to disregard these features is to miss the point Tolkien makes about fantasy, and by extension, Recovery as well.

Finally, Recovery, Tolkien asserts, cannot be extricated from the necessity for a fully realised fantasy space, or Secondary World, Tolkien's name for the fictional world evoked by skilful story-telling where the fantastic has its home. The notion that the fantastic is at 'home' is significant, as in Tolkien's view the skilfully rendered fantasy world has its own 'Secondary' reality, and we are humbled by the deep impression of its independent life. In trespassing upon its 'shadowy marches', we thus lose our false sense of appropriation; we discover that all we 'had (or knew) was dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild; no more yours than they were [us]' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:58-59).This is the essence of Recovery, and it goes far beyond Wood's definition of it as 'the gaining of new perspectives'.

The significance of place in Tolkien's idea of fantasy, and its indispensability for the function of Recovery, is central to his conceptualisation. For Tolkien, the experience of pleasure in fantasy is a matter of experiencing Other-*where*, a space worked upon by the enchantment of distance and strangeness. But in South African fantastic fiction, as Wood's study suggests, distance is inconstant, otherness is here and now, and the boundaries are unstable.

Wood's rigorous and thoroughly contextualised study of the value and function of the fantastic in English South African fiction is an invaluable starting-point for the questions my thesis explores. However, the focus of her incisive study tends to be on the road the development of the fantastic in South African fiction has taken, rather than the path it seems to have abandoned. It is the other path, overgrown, passed by (though not utterly unused) and concealing many questions (rather than answers, as I have found) that my own study explores. Specifically, I question whether disturbance, discomfort, and mockery are the only possible or valuable effects of the South African space within the aesthetic of the fantastic? Is enchantment never possible without the regrettable by-products of intellectual complacency

and unproductive escapism? Is it impossible for the fantastic to enable us to desire the experience of being in a South African inspired space and consequently to Recover a sense of wonder for South Africa as place? What are the implications for enchantment specifically in configurations of the South African space in fantastic narratives? Is enchantment operative within a paradigm alternative to Tolkien's conception, one which does not rely on the dualism of realism and fantasy?

The significance of Tolkien's criticism extends beyond its applicability to his own work, and his conceptualization of the fantastic is widely recognized as characteristic of a sub-genre in itself that is distinct from other members of the fantastic family. To use another metaphor, Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn begin their introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (2012:1) by establishing that fantasy 'is not so much a mansion as a row of terraced houses', connected in diverse ways and in varying degrees, and 'each with a door that leads into another world', meaning another configuration of the fantastic. 'There are shared walls, and a certain level of consensus around the basic bricks, but the internal décor can differ wildly, and the lives lived in these terraced houses are discrete yet overheard' (James and Mendlesohn, 2012:1). Identifying the terms on which desirability and Recovery operate for the purposes of this study firstly involves locating Tolkien's concept of fantasy in this neighbourhood of terraced houses. Only in isolating its specificity is it possible to trace the possibilities of an architecture capable of housing similar aesthetic effects on another continent altogether. This is a delicate process since different configurations of the fantastic occur and these often overlap or provide entry into each other, as James's and Mendlesohn's metaphor of terraced houses suggests. But the process is neither impossible nor fruitless, as I hope to show.

In her discussion of South African fantastic fiction, Felicity Wood's confrontation with the issue of definition is telling. In her attempt to account for the wide range of possible fantastic narratives, she opts for an inclusive understanding, and works with Kathryn Hume's (Wood: 2001:52) 'description of the fantastic as any departure from consensus reality'. One consequence of this is that the significance of the differences between literary manifestations of the fantastic are underplayed, and Wood is able to encompass within her study not only the diverse range of manifestations of the fantastic in South African fiction, but also the indeterminacy and elusiveness of the forms that the South African fantastic has tended to take. As Wood (2001:2) observes, fantasy in any form is largely absent from the history of South African adult fiction, and when it does occur, its forms tend to tease at and trouble realist evocations of the South African space rather than effect departure into evocative, imaginary worlds. The expansiveness of Hume's (1984: xii, 131) definition of the fantastic as a 'departure' from the 'limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal' or departure from 'consensus reality' therefore suits Wood's project, which is to describe literary productions of the South African fantastic rather than explore the divergences of South African fantasies from mainstream productions. But the scope of this study is far more specific, and the question of divergence lies at the heart of my inquiry.

The existence and predominance of the Tolkien sub-genre is acknowledged by various fantasy critics, though not many have attempted to describe or differentiate such a sub-genre from other forms. A notable exception is Tzvetan Todorov's (1970) structural study *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Although Todorov never refers to Tolkien's work in his study, he assigns to fantasy in Tolkien's mould the term 'marvellous' and problematically distinguishes it from the pure fantastic. (The problem with Todorov's terminology is similar to the awkwardness, from a contemporary perspective, of Tolkien's

use of 'fairy-tales' throughout his essay on fantasy fiction; these are terms which have not been taken up by succeeding theorists or marketing forces and their definitions more properly correspond to 'fantasy' within both popular and academic lexicons.) A theorist that does explicitly identify Tolkien's fantasy under Todorov's 'marvellous' branch is Rosemary Jackson, whose book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981) analyses various fantastic works within Todorov's paradigm. However, Jackson is largely dismissive of marvellous narratives and hardly discusses Tolkien's work at all (Jackson, 1981:9).

Within the works of other critics, vagueness in relation to genre differentiation is frequently the result of an assumption that the Tolkien-esque version of fantasy defines the form. This is the case when Elisabeth Ann Leonard (1997: 4), using Tolkien as her primary example, offers the unexplained term 'traditional fantasy' in her exploration of race in fantasy literature and when Gerald Gaylard (2005: 45), in his discussion of African magical realism, asserts that there is no 'classic fantasy' in African literature, which he clarifies only by adding, 'there is no *The Lord of the Rings*'. Ann Swinfen (1984), in her study of the genre, takes as her subject what she terms the 'modern fantasy novel', but in fact only discusses works which lend themselves very easily to Tolkien's definition, and references Tolkien's criticism extensively in her definition of the genre. Swinfen's (1984:3) dismissal of the existence of other kinds of fantasy can be evidenced in her vague remark that the 'writings of Mervyn Peake…have been studied elsewhere, as his novels …appear to be rather different in character from the works being discussed'. She makes no attempt to account for the differences in character between Tolkien and a great deal of fantastic literature, and the absence of these other works from her study is likewise not explained.

The attitudes of these critics are telling in that they indicate the significance of Tolkien's influence; their choice of the terminology 'traditional' and 'classic' in particular can be seen to reflect what is usefully suggested in fantasy theorist Brian Attebery's (1992:14) argument that Tolkien's example is what most readily comes to mind when the term 'fantasy' is used in the context of literature. In contrast with these other theorists, Attebery's study *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) accounts for the significance of Tolkien but neither renders other forms of the fantastic invisible nor suggests that Tolkien's status is immutable. Attebery (1992:2) has this to say:

> …many readers would never think of including Shakespeare or Dante under the heading of fantasy. Instead, they associate the term with a popular story-telling formula that is restricted in scope, recent in origin, and specialised in audience and appeal. They are thinking of fantasy-as-formula, which is essentially a commercial product, with particular authors or publishers' lines serving as brand names for the consumer.

Acknowledging that fantasy-as-formula is far too restrictive as a working definition whereas fantasy-as-mode is impossibly vast, Attebery (1992:2) proposes a useful 'in-between category', fantasy-as-genre: 'something capable of artistic development and yet limited to a particular period and discernible structure'. Furthermore, fantasy-as-genre, as envisioned by Attebery, incorporates both the shifting nature of genre and the current predominance of Tolkien within this 'popular' branch of the fantastic. This allows Attebery (1992:11) to approach genres as '"fuzzy sets", meaning that they are defined not by boundaries but by a [centre]'. He (1992:14) locates Tolkien's version of the fantastic at the centre of current configurations of the set, asserting that

> …with the publication and popular acceptance of Tolkien's version of the fantastic, a new coherence was given to the genre. His was not the first modern fantasy…But Tolkien is most typical, not just because of the imaginative scope and commitment with which he invested his tale but also, and chiefly, because of the immense popularity which resulted.

However, it is important to note that Attebery (1992:14) also cautions that Tolkien's status is subject to change and only remains until 'someone else achieves equal recognition with an alternative conception'. For the purposes of this study, I find Attebery's approach to the issue of genre to be the most useful, as it differentiates fantasies in Tolkien's mould from other configurations of the fantastic, and neither disregards the predominance of this sub-genre nor fails to account for the divergence of forms that the fantastic can and does take. Yet a distinguishing term, as well as a working definition, is needed for the purposes of this study. While Attebery's location of Tolkien-fantasy at the centre of the fantasy genre, conceived as a fuzzy set, resolves the problematic marginalization that Todorov's designation of 'the marvellous' (as distinct from the 'fantastic') implies, Attebery's term 'genre fantasy' does not signal the distinctiveness of Tolkien-fantasy.

On the other hand, despite my desire for specificity, the term 'Tolkien-fantasy' also has undesirable limitations, since the fantasies I wish to include under this umbrella do not overlap in every respect with Tolkien's work (though they do in certain key respects, resulting in my wish for an over-arching descriptive term). Thus, for the purposes of signalling distinctiveness, I have adopted a modified form of Todorov's (1970) phrase 'the marvellous', a term which can be linked to Attebery's definition of Tolkien-fantasy. I will therefore use the term 'marvellous fantasy' throughout this study to refer to fantasy in Tolkien's mould. What follows is a detailed delineation of this sub-genre.

According to Attebery (1992:14), 'one way to characterize the genre of fantasy [i.e. marvellous fantasy] is [as] the set of texts that…tend to resemble [Tolkien's fantasy work] *The Lord of the Rings* in three…fundamental ways. One of these has to do with content, another with structure, and the third with reader response.' The first of these aspects has

already been discussed at some length, and involves the tacit understanding established between author and reader of the distinction between the real and the fantastic, with the added injunction that such a distinction is central to the narrative. 'The essential component,' says Attebery (1992:14), is

> the impossible, or… 'some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law'…The broader field of the fantastic may include the improbable, the implausible, the highly unlikely, and the as-yet-nonexistent. But fantasy, as it has crystalized around central works like *The Lord of the Rings*, demands a sharper break with reality.

Likewise, Todorov (1973:25) defines the marvellous as that branch of fantasy in which there is no uncertainty regarding the status of the fantastic; the reader does not wonder whether 'an event which cannot be explained by the laws of [the] familiar world' is a result of a 'delusion of the senses'. Rather, the reader is certain that 'the event has indeed take place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown', laws which 'evoke a universe different from our own' (Todorov, 1973:72) and therefore demand, as Attebery (1992:14) puts it, 'a sharper break with reality'. This aspect of Attebery's characterization locates genre fantasy within a cultural tradition at odds with trends that Wood (2001) identifies within South African fantastic literature, trends which trouble and collapse the dualism of the fantastic and the real.

'Second,' says Attebery (1992:4), 'the characteristic structure of fantasy is comic. It begins with a problem and ends with a resolution.' Attebery qualifies this by noting that much fantasy does not end happily in the simple fairy-tale sense and that an essential theme explored in many fantasies is the cost of victory. 'But in each case,' he (1992:15) asserts, 'the problem initially posed by the narrative has been solved, the task successfully completed'. This characteristic is directly linked to the third feature of marvellous fantasy, which has to do with reader response and describes the quality of the fantasy's happy ending.

The happy ending found in marvellous fantasy, observes Attebery (1992:16), is no 'simple emotional payoff. What the reader experiences in a fantasy is not the same satisfaction that results from getting a Jane Austen heroine married or finding treasure for Jim Hawkins'. Happy endings in fantasy are deeply serious, inspire awe, and produce joy that is, in Tolkien's words ([1964] 2001:70), 'poignant as grief'. Tolkien names this 'eucatastrophe':

> In its fairy-tale – or otherworld – setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium… (Tolkien [1964] 2001:69).

As Attebery (1992:15) points out, Tolkien's language, when describing this effect, has religious overtones which reflect the Catholic outlook that informs his work. However, a more useful term for the quality of the happy ending, used elsewhere by Tolkien, has been proposed by Attebery (1992:16): 'wonder'. The happy ending Tolkien describes is infused with wonder; it is joy beyond possibility, 'poignant as grief'. Tolkien ([1964] 2001:14) calls wonder the 'primal desire' at the 'heart' of fantasy. It is wonder which forms the defining quality of marvellous fantasy. Notably, Attebery (1992:16) identifies wonder as the primary effect of the genre's production of other-worldly strangeness. While this is not to suggest categorically that other forms of fantastic literature are incapable of inspiring wonder, the encounter with strangeness, as distinct from 'realism', is what sets the wonder inspired by marvellous fantasy apart from the effects of other forms of the fantastic.

In 'On Faerie-Stories', Tolkien ([1964] 2001:47), like Manlove (1975:1), sees wonder as closely associated with strangeness, the 'derived notions of "unreality"'; he describes fantasy as 'both the Sub-creative Art...and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image: a quality essential to fairy-story'. Wonder, for Tolkien, is essential for Recovery and enchantment. 'It was in fairy-stories,' he [1964] 2001:60) declares, 'that I

first divined the potency of the words, and the wonder of the things, such as stone, and wood, and iron; tree and grass; house and fire; bread and wine'. To achieve Recovery, for Tolkien, is to recover the wonder of things which have been dulled by over-familiarity. To experience wonder is to be enchanted, but necessary for this is the loss of a false sense of appropriation. According to Tolkien ([1964] 2001:58):

> …the things that are trite, or (in a bad sense) familiar, are the things that we have appropriated, legally or mentally. We say we know them. They have become like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring, ceased to look at them.

Related to the need for a loss of appropriation is the necessary realization of the 'wildness' of things, of their being apart from us, the acknowledgment of their freedom from our possessiveness. Manlove (1983:ix) identifies this impulse as the 'insistence on and celebration of the separate identities of created things'. Therefore, the result of highly skilled fantasy, for Tolkien, is the opening of the 'hoard' (Tolkien's metaphor for a dulled view and imprisoning mind-set) and the release of 'all the locked things [so that they may] fly away like cage-birds.' This process, which seems to be transformative, is actually revealing of the true nature of things, allowing 'gems [to] turn into flowers or flames,' and enabling the insight that everything deceptively dull, familiar and ours is really 'dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild; no more yours than they were you' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:58-59).Therefore, for Tolkien, the result (and purpose) of being enchanted by strangeness is that we find the familiar enchanting as well.

Tolkien's language here, his use of metaphor and terminology which incorporates both the qualities of fear ('flames', 'dangerous', 'wild') and pleasure ('flowers', 'free') within the effect of Recovery, is revealing about his understanding of wonder, signalling the centrality of a sublime aesthetic in marvellous fantasy. The sublime characterizes the pleasure of

marvellous fantasy and enables its effective appeal. It is this aspect of marvellous fantasy in particular that I aim to investigate in South African fantasy, examining the potential for this quality in representations of the South African space in fantastic texts, and in particular the way it is determined and affected by the fantastic. The sublime is inextricably related to desirability in the marvellous.

In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Attebery (1992:22) argues against Rosemary Jackson's (1981:3) contention that fantastic narratives can only 'either express or repel' desires, noting that C.S. Lewis's criticism articulates a third function: arousing desire. Discussing marvellous fantasy specifically, Lewis (1980:215) says that fantasy 'stirs and troubles…(to [one's] lifelong enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond [one's] reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth.' Yet Jackson's (1981:3) suspicion of transcendentalist descriptions of fantasy (especially marvellous fantasy) that place it 'mysteriously "outside" time altogether' is a valid one. It is therefore important to note Attebery's (1992:22) defence of this position:

> For…Lewis, it is true, longing for the non-existent could be a preliminary to personal experience of the divine. Yet, Lewis's formulation can be translated into purely materialistic terms and still remain valid. These new desires are probably built from existing elements. Just as complex emotions like love are built from less lofty impulses, for example, the pairing instinct and the sexual drive, the… longing engendered by fantasy has its roots in the various physical and emotional hungers we have all experienced from infancy…Whatever its origins, such longing is an important component in the cognitive shift toward wonder engendered by successful [marvellous] fantasy.

For Lewis, as for Tolkien ([1964] 2001:41) who states that marvellous fantasy succeeds when it awakens desire, 'satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably', the value and, perhaps ultimate, end of fantasy is the taste it cultivates for the transcendent through its use of the sublime. The transcendent, however, need not be interpreted in purely religious terms, but as an articulation of the most nearly (*not* completely) pure-imaginative, that which evokes

emotions *associated* with the divine or otherworldly, without attempting to endow this with descriptions that might fix it too concretely (and therefore diminish its effect) within the circles of the known and familiar.

Adam Roberts (2012:26), discussing fantasy as one of Gothic literature's 'generic descendants', is dismissive of attempts by fantasy's defenders to link the derided otherness of fantasy to the philosophy of the sublime, seeing it as a misguided and desperate attempt to 'bring respectability to a disreputable mode of writing'. For Roberts, fantasy is defined, not by the transcendent, but by the excess of the ludicrous. Roberts (2012:28) sees the ludicrous as the genre's strength, asserting that it 'is as if emphasizing the ludicrous aspects of the genre, rather than denigrating or diminishing the mode, actually *augments* it. Less robust cultural phenomena would be exterminated by such mockery; fantasy, on the contrary, thrives upon it.'

Roberts's argument that fantasy is fundamentally characterized by the ludicrous is not well-supported, however, and the instability lies in his approach to fantasy purely as a descendent of the Gothic, which he (2012:28) rightly sees characterized by 'transgressive [as opposed to transcendent] intensity'. However, fantasy's roots extend into various traditions besides the Gothic, some of them closely informed by sublime aesthetics, as David Sandner (2011) argues. Roberts's (2012:26) own description of Edmund Burke's philosophy of the sublime bears a strong resemblance to Tolkien's account of what Tolkien believes to be fantasy's highest end:

> For Burke, art was sublime if it evoked a sort of refining terror, or horror; if it filled people with awe; if it gave our mortal brains a searing peek at infinity. It was, for him, in other words, a fundamentally *religious* matter. The sublimity evoked by a book, painting or landscape was a particular blend of inspiration and fear that had to do with the scale of representation, and the transcendent possibilities. Obscurity and the fragmentary were

> important to it because by their nature they hinted at the unrepresentable—God—instead of purporting actually to apprehend it.

David Sandner's (2011:2) argument, 'that the fantastic functions as a discourse of the sublime in literature' in both *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 17-12* (2011) and *The Fantastic Sublime* (1996) is central to the quest embodied by this study. In particular, his location of the fantastic sublime within literary developments that can be identified as Eurocentric (though he does not characterize them as such) sheds significant light on the differences between South African productions of the fantastic and marvellous fantasy. In this sense, his criticism provides a useful platform from which to view resistances to Eurocentric constructs in South African fantasy as well as account for the curious absence of marvellous fantasy in South African literature.

Although (unlike Adams) Sandner (1992:3) recognizes the importance of the transcendent within discourses of the fantastic, the content of his study operates by '[d]emystifying the fantastic imagination', thereby effectively engaging with Rosemary Jackson's (1981:3) charge of transcendentalist defences of the fantastic that place it 'mysteriously outside time altogether'. In this way, he can be seen to take up Attebery's analysis of Lewis's account of the 'longing', and Tolkien's description of the 'desire' for transcendence cultivated by fantasy, and extend it by focusing attention on the moment at which transcendence is evoked. Acknowledging the transcendent moment as an important component of the encounter with fantastic literature, Sandner's criticism also does not admit the notion of the fantastic as independent of the spatial and historical locations of its production:

> An underlying assumption…is that the fantastic never escapes its moment and its place. The fantastic comments on 'reality' not only as in a distorted funhouse mirror or as a yearning glimpse of a transcendental realm but also in a necessary and dialectical—antagonistic but complementary—relationship with its contemporary moment' (Sandner, 2011:14).

Rather, his study offers a criticism of the fantastic which enables, as he (1992:2) puts it, 'an apprehension of the real [in its contemporary moment] in all its confusion, its frightfulness, its mystery, and its wonder.'

In *Critical Discourses of the Fantastic, 1712-1831* (2011), Sandner compares Thomas Weiskel's description of the 'sublime process' in *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (1986) to Tolkien's criticism in 'On Fairy-Stories'. Sandner (2011:25) finds compelling parallels between the encounter with the sublime, 'realized as a breakdown of understanding' and the experience with what Tolkien ([1964] 2001:48) describes as 'arresting strangeness': In both, the

> …confrontation of the mind with something new, something certainly not 'habitual,' challenges the 'smooth correspondence of inner and outer'…Reality destabilizes as the mind reels in excess, an excess which blurs the boundaries between self and other…The fantastic…in Weiskel's scheme, threaten[s] excess at the level of the sign; the fantastic brings amazement through the realization of estrangement from language. The fantastic challenges the 'smooth correspondence' of the text and meaning altogether (Sandner, 2011:25).

The significance of this scheme in analysing the defining qualities of 'desirability' in marvellous fantasy is that it characterizes the pleasure of marvellous fantasy by the experience of the sublime, a pleasure very different from the amusement derived in the imaginative play identified by Wood in South African fantasy. Sandner (2011:26) locates the experience of pleasure in Weiskel's third stage of the experience of the sublime, in which something

> …beyond comprehension that overwhelms the self becomes nevertheless, surprisingly, suddenly (perhaps desperately) interpreted as a sign of the self's very ability to participate in the transcendent; the sublime proves to be a state in which self-reflection reveals the inadequacy of the self to remain stable and secure, but also paradoxically confirms to the mind its special ability to abstract and apprehend the vast 'beyond' in all its mystery. The self relates to a 'transcendent order' by sharing with that unknowable state of things an intimate knowledge of the self's inadequacy in comparison to

> it—one's recognition of inadequacy, in other words, becomes a kind of knowledge of what cannot be known, giving one a strange but apparently palpable sense of mastery. Or at least one feels as if a rope still holds one over the void, endless though it seems.

The paradoxical experience of the self's ability to grasp (and thus master) the mystery of the 'beyond' in the very moment of inadequacy accounts for the pleasure of the sublime as well as Tolkien's insistence on the deep seriousness of Joy in fantasy, and the enchanting effect of the frightening potency enabled by Recovery. Interestingly, Sandner also notes the possibility suggested in Weiskel's scheme for a negative experience of the transcendent as well as a positive one. As Sandner (2011:27) points out, while 'Tolkien's marvellous and its promise of Consolation remain a necessary possible outcome' of the encounter with strangeness, that which is in excess of the known at the level of the sign, another possibility is an encounter with a vastness of space that can be read as emptied of meaning. In the latter, the result is not the marvellous, but the Gothic, which 'responds to such an emptying out of the sublime by expressing terror of the remaining void' (Sandner, 2011:28). Sandner thus identifies the encounter with strangeness as a locus of tension between these two outcomes which are necessary for the full effect of either Consolation or terror. As he (2011:21) points out, 'Tolkien predicates Consolation on… "dyscatastrophe," the possibility of "sorrow and failure"; the experience of Consolation is powerful precisely because it is 'never to be counted on' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:69).

The second reason for the significance of Sandner's work is that his study describes and discusses the fantastic as crucially informed by Eurocentric historical developments (though without identifying its history as such). This conceptualization critically hinges on the encounter with 'strangeness', that is, the supernatural or the magical, as a category at odds with modernity. And modernity in this formulation is identified with a very specifically

Western, linear trajectory. According to Sandner (2011:7), 'modern fantastic literature' embodies a fundamental tension that can be traced back to Joseph Addison's essays on 'The Pleasures of the Imagination':

> On the one hand, the fantastic is presented as purely imaginary, as having 'no existence,' thereby framing, and so calling into question, the 'existence,' whatever is understood as real and known. On the other hand, the fantastic is associated with a tradition of exploded supernatural beliefs from fairies to demons…
>
> …Addison's assumption that the two sides of his definition—the wholly other and the superstitious—do fit together in one literary form marks his work as an early critical essay on the fantastic—indeed, as the first important critical definition of fantastic literature as an acutely modern form linked in an uncanny relationship with the superstitious past. The basic tension between the form as 'wholly' imaginary and as the repetition of an all-too-familiar supernatural past defines the genre (Sandner, 2011:13).

According to Sandner, modern fantasy is thus defined by 'strangeness' which remains associated with a body of superstitious belief exploded by the advent of modernity.

> The term 'fantastic' emphasizes the genre's own production of itself as self-consciously imaginary; the genre ultimately presents itself not as supernatural but as a sceptical literature grounded in the imagination as a modern faculty of the mind—that is, as 'pretend', a 'game' or 'thought experiment,' with the act of thinking itself, the interiority of modern identity, foregrounded (Sandner, 2011:15).

And yet, and this is the central thrust of Sandner's argument, the superstitious past 'haunts' modernity with its 'uncanny return'. Thus, for Sandner (2011:2), when theorists like Tolkien 'attempt to cultivate the genre's production of wonder and fear—that is, its sublime affect—while minimizing its threat to the stability of the modern imagination...perhaps all these critics achieve in the end is a heightened realization of the all too "real" threat the fantastic poses to modern identity'. Since the strict opposition between the fantastic and the real crucially underlies the definition for marvellous fantasy I have proposed, I wish to address this aspect of Sandner's theory before moving on.

Sandner argues for a revision of Todorov's (1970) differentiation between uncanny tales, in which the apparently magical or supernatural is rationally accounted for, marvellous texts, in which the supernatural is taken at face-value, and the pure fantastic, which Todorov sees defined by unresolved uncertainty ('hesitation') about the status of the fantastic. 'The fantastic', says Todorov (1970:25), 'occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or another [the supernatural can be explained away or is really the supernatural], we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous'. According to Sandner (2011:18), while the moment of hesitation that marks the divergence of the marvellous and uncanny within Todorov's structural approach becomes resolved once the reader determines the fantastic to be either marvellous or uncanny, 'the notion of "uncertainty"…remains a constitutive part' of both the marvellous *and* the uncanny. This notion rests on an incomplete understanding of some of Tolkien's concepts, in particular a misunderstanding of the relationships between Escape, Recovery and Consolation in Tolkien's conceptual paradigm.

Firstly, Sandner (2011:21) interprets Recovery as enabling Escape into the 'invisible world of the spirit' because it elevates us above the world of the ordinary. Where Tolkien emphasises the potency of ordinary things that might be revealed through recognizing their apartness from ourselves, Sandner misses this point in his attempt to establish a direct connection between the functions of Recovery and Escape. In Sandner's (2011:18) words, Recovery enables humanity to discover 'itself, through estrangement, to be apart from (not a part of) "mere" things' whereas Tolkien actually argues that fantasy works to oppose the kind of thinking that reduces the ordinary world to 'mere-ness'. I am not, however, arguing that there is no connection to be found between Recovery and Escape in Tolkien's criticism, but rather that Tolkien finds Recovery to enable Escape because it renders visible the sheen of divinity

in all things. This hints at the existence of the world of the spirit, and derives from it, but does not directly enable our own transcendence of ordinary reality, except in so far as our awareness of the divine is revitalised as a result. The connection Sandner assumes between Recovery and Consolation is even more problematic.

Sandner (2011:21) understands Tolkien to be arguing that the successful creation of Secondary Belief, resulting from the skilled rendering of a secondary reality, provides a glance at the transcendent Joy ('Consolation' in Tolkien's terms), that is possible in those worlds. However, while Recovery is dependent on Secondary Belief (readers cannot recover the potency of the ordinary through their placement in a fantasy setting if the fantasy setting is not rendered skilfully), it does not follow that 'the fantastic, through Recovery, enables an Escape into Consolation' (Sandner, 2011:21). The fallacy in Sandner's argument resides, firstly, in his equation of Todorov's notion of uncertainty (about whether the status of the fantastic creates a fictional world, as in the marvellous, or simply reconfigures, without violating, the reader's understanding of real-world possibilities, as in the uncanny) with Tolkien's concept of 'arresting strangeness'. Like 'Todorov's moment of hesitation,' Sandner (2011:19) reasons, '"Fantasy" for Tolkien is identified by its "arresting strangeness", by the moment of confrontation with something "other" which one apprehends but does not comprehend. Tolkien defines the marvellous fantastic by its very strangeness, and thus, by its inability to be defined...' The problem with this reasoning is that Tolkien does not mean 'strangeness', that which is indescribable in the fantastic, to signal a hesitation about whether or not the fantastic will be explained away; strangeness for Tolkien establishes the status of the fantastic as marvellous from the moment of confrontation. Its indescribable qualities relate rather to the aspects of the marvellous which escape definition; 'it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:10).

Secondly, the fallacy appears in Sandner's equation of dyscatastrophe, the possibility of sorrow and failure on which the power of Joy/Consolation depends, with Todorov's 'uncanny'. According to Sandner (2011:21-22), when Tolkien 'predicates Consolation on… "dyscatastrophe"', Tolkien's criticism thus identifies his own 'uncertainty or "hesitation" in the fantastic text'. In Sandner's understanding, Tolkien's criticism asserts that 'a failure to realize enchantment would confirm the ordinary world, indicating it is not apart from ourselves after all; in other words, what Todorov calls the uncanny—the realization that something is, though quite strange, merely real—underlies Tolkien's marvellous fantastic as a negative possibility'. As I have already argued, Tolkien's idea of enchantment is not that it liberates us from the ordinary, but that that it reveals our feelings about the ordinary to be a false sense of appropriation. Furthermore, Sandner equates dyscatastrophe with a failure to realise enchantment. However, while it is possible to see that the functions of the marvellous, Recovery, Escape and Consolation, do support each other, it is important to note that Tolkien discusses them separately and that they are naturally extricable. I will argue that it is, furthermore, quite certain that Tolkien nowhere asserts that the failure of Consolation (Joy) is synonymous with the failure of Recovery. It is perhaps necessary here to briefly consider how Tolkien's theory works out, not in his criticism, but in his most influential fantasy, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955).

Reduced to its simplest description, *The Lord of the Rings* is about a quest to destroy a magic ring that will give an evil being called Sauron the power to subordinate the races of men, dwarves, and elves to his will and control all other things in the fictional world of Middle-earth. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien affords the experience of Recovery most clearly through his characters' encounters with the elves. Immortal, invariably beautiful, and characterised above all by wondrous artistic creativity, the elves embody the 'old ambitions

and desires' identified by Tolkien ([1964] 2001:66) as central to fantasy which are unobtainable through realism. What is more significant, however, is the way ordinary activities like eating, drinking, and experiences of music and nature are endowed with wonder and joy through encounters with the elves. It is characteristic of these encounters that characters who experience these activities in the presence of the elves or in remembrance of them often feel as if they had never realized the pleasure of such ordinary experiences before. This is encapsulated in the depiction of Frodo's experience of the elven realm of Lothlórien:

> The others cast themselves down upon the fragrant grass. But Frodo stood awhile still lost in wonder. It seemed to him that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he saw was shapely, but the shapes seemed at once clear cut, as if they had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as if they had endured forever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful (Tolkien, 2005 [1954]: 459-460).

This, essentially, is Recovery enacted, enabling the reader to likewise rediscover an appreciation of the ordinary. However, the appeal of the elves is given poignancy through reminders of their vulnerability, as I will discuss further, not through establishing their resilience. They are thus used by Tolkien to impart to the reader a keen sense of the fleeting nature of the beautiful aspects of life. It is therefore easy to discern how Recovery is underpinned by the possibility of dyscatastrophe. Likewise, the power of Consolation is certainly enabled by the threat of dyscatastrophe as this imparts to the happy ending its deep poignancy. However, it is less clear that either Recovery or Enchantment, as Sandner interprets it, is dependent on Consolation.

Attebery (1992:15) argues that the 'characteristic structure of fantasy is comic. It begins with a problem and ends with a resolution' and that if 'it were otherwise, if for instance, the Ring

were simply hidden again or fallen, despite the heroes' best efforts, into the hands of the Enemy, then we would not have the structural completeness of fantasy, but the truncated story-forms of absurdism or horror'. This is a valid point, as it would be hard to imagine how a story in which evil prevails, especially one which describes a world inhabited by unimaginable beauties, would leave one with anything but an aghast sense of loss. Yet notice that Attebery sees the failure of Consolation resulting in absurdism or horror, not the uncanny. Dyscatastrophe, in Tolkien's narrative, would not 'confirm the ordinary world' as Sandner (2011:21) understands Tolkien's criticism to mean, and it is not the uncanny, as Sandner (2011:22) argues, that 'underlies Tolkien's marvellous fantastic as a negative possibility'. If anything, the negative possibility underlying the marvellous is, interestingly, a kind of dark sublime, the apprehension of a malevolent or apathetic divinity, or else an emptied transcendence, pointing to a void. However, even in such a scenario, Recovery would be possible, though it might take on a different meaning. The failure of the quest to destroy the ring would affirm the antagonist's power, not belie the existence of the elves.

It is, furthermore, unclear that enchantment is necessarily undermined by the failure of Consolation. This suggests that experiences of intense beauty or joy are rendered meaningless by mutability. This is not borne out by Tolkien's narrative itself. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the ancient elf-woman Galadriel sees the struggle of the elves for the preservation of their works and their power as 'the long defeat' (Tolkien, 2001:468). She explains to Frodo, arguably the primary protagonist, that whether or not the war against Sauron is won, the time of the elves has come to an end. After the success of the quest in *The Lord of the Rings*, the elves still depart from Middle-earth, never to return. Contrary to Sandner's suggestion that Consolation enables Escape from the ordinary, the archetypal marvellous tale has the world becoming less magical, not more, with the unfolding of Consolation. However, the transience of the magical

completes, rather than undermines, the operation of Recovery as the protagonists appreciate the ordinary world even more for the fleeting nature of the magic they have experienced. This parallels the experience of the reader, who must return to the ordinary world after the tale has ended, longing for the transcendent, but enriched by the appreciation of the ordinary.

Striking observations about the South African space's resistance to the sublime have been made by literary critics outside the subject of the fantastic. Drawing, like Sandner, on Weiskel's *The Romantic Sublime* (1976), celebrated South African author and literary critic J.M. Coetzee is a notable example. While Sandner notes the significance of Weiskel's definition to a (marvellous) fantasy paradigm, Coetzee (1988:51) argues that although the 'topos of the [South African] interior as a wilderness is…common enough', the 'development we might have expected…had the European model been followed—namely, the reclamation of this nameless wilderness, or what aspects of it are amenable to reclamation, in the name of the sublime—never occurred.'

Similar observations about the South African space's resistance to the sublime have been made by Shum (2008:17) whose reading of Thomas Pringle's 'Evening Rambles' argues that the poem offers a 'conflicted and uncertain understanding of colonial landscape as a site that both invites and resists the imposition of European schemas'. What Shum (2008:22) calls the 'indigenous sublime', in Pringle's poem,

> …both threatens and abases the imagination; it is unnerving, infernal; its intensities carry the threat of self-dissolution. Why, we must ask, does the sublime, so productive an aesthetic category in its European context, become utterly unbearable when evoked by the experience of a South African landscape, where it becomes a sublime of terror in which nature itself seems unnatural?

It is one of the aims of this thesis to articulate a counter to the remarkable notion that the South African space cannot evoke the sublime, either at all or in a 'constructive' sense. It is also an important reason why my study commences with an analysis of *King Solomon's Mines* by H. Rider Haggard, a novel intrinsically informed by sublime aesthetics. However, before I explain the significance of my selection of novels, I will briefly address the notion of the sublime as a 'constructive' category, and the suggestion inherent in the concept of its opposite, a 'sublime of terror'.

According to Shum, the 'indigenous' sublime 'threatens and abases' the imagination; the implication here is that the subject's imagined participation in the transcendent signified by sheer excess, resulting in exhilaration, is frustrated. In Weiskel's paradigm, the necessary first step in the experience of the sublime is for the mind to be overwhelmed by sheer excess, to be threatened, and to teeter at the brink of, but not fall into, 'self-dissolution' (Sandner, 2011:25). The constructive turn hinges crucially on the self's paradoxical interpretation of being overwhelmed as its ability to participate in the transcendent as 'one's recognition of inadequacy…becomes a kind of knowledge of what cannot be known' (Sandner, 2011:26).

The implication of Shum's interpretation then is that the colonial landscape evokes an excess that cannot be accommodated in terms of a *familiar* transcendent, resulting in an experience of inadequacy that expands, diminishes, and overwhelms completely, dissolving even the reassuring parameters of self that registers inadequacy. Here anxiety is not the necessary undercurrent to an ennobling humility, but the sole response to an emptying of meaning, signified in a landscape that embodies a void. The key effect of an alien land is alienation because nature does not illuminate subjectivity but obliterates it; as Shum says 'nature becomes unnatural'. My thesis will show that this is certainly not the only possible

experience of the South African landscape, but will also weigh its appeal against some of the more problematic aspects of the sublime aesthetic, specifically the legacy of its implication within nineteenth-century imperialist politics.

I will end this section by summing up the central points I have endeavoured to make about marvellous fantasy. Firstly, the effect of successful marvellous fantasy is to give pleasure of a particular quality and mood, characterised by the sublime. It entices by enchanting, and it enchants by rendering spaces desirable. Marvellous fantasy thus has the potential to be a most formidable vehicle for ideology, because at its most powerful, it affords the moving experience of the transcendent without the threat of serious anxiety, making it a near-unrivalled source of pleasure. This, it accomplishes because the marvellous may be defined by fantastic elements that are understood to be safely and irretrievably buried by modern consciousness, by the assurance, that is, that they pose no threat to a reality that is, in turn, defined by the non-existence of those same elements in literal forms.

Secondly, marvellous fantasy relies, for the full and effective reception of its meaning, on this understanding: that the fantastic, the magical or supernatural, is not to be taken to have any bearing on the limits of modern reality. The fantastic, in the marvellous, gestures, solely within the role of artistic creation, at the transcendent beyond the modern real without explicitly specifying the nature of the transcendent; it does not haunt the modern identity with the threat of its literal forms. For example, the otherworldliness of the elves in *The Lord of the Rings* hints at the Christian world of the spirit, it does not signal the uncanny return of a belief in elves. For the elves to be accepted literally would undermine and confuse the meanings towards which Tolkien's fantasy directs us. Were marvellous texts to be produced within a context where this is not understood, the systems of signification within the

marvellous would alter drastically, in essence transforming it into something other than the marvellous, into a different configuration of fantastic art.

Tolkien ([1964] 2001:50-51) drives home the point regarding belief in the literal forms of the fantastic as incompatible with fantasy in 'On Fairy-Stories':

> In *Macbeth*, when it is read, I find the witches tolerable: they have a narrative function and some hint of dark significance, though they are vulgarised, poor things of their kind…I am told that I should feel differently if I had the mind of the period, with its witch-hunts and witch-trials. But that is to say if I regarded the witches as possible, indeed likely, in the Primary World; in other words if they ceased to be 'Fantasy'.

Tolkien's words bring me back to the uncomfortable and discomforting position of the South African fantastic, wherein there is, and can be, no such confident assumption of what will be interpreted literally, or of what constitutes 'fantasy' and 'reality'.

It is the purpose of this study to analyse the South African space in fantastic narratives as a potential site of desire, characterised by the category of the sublime. My analysis is informed by the key characteristics of marvellous fantasy as described in this chapter. While this approach might suggest a fixation on an arbitrary generic grouping, I hope I have shown that my aim is neither simply genre delineation nor the imposition of foreign paradigms on local texts in order to underline failures in the South African fantastic. What I am interested in is the absence of a South African marvellous text, and the questions implied by that absence. Thus my aim in delineating a genre such as the marvellous is to identify a literary aesthetic in ways that enable new questions to be asked about the uses of the fantastic in South African literature. As such, I reiterate Farah Mendlesohn's (2008:xv) similar caveat about the use of genre expectations in fantasy: 'The construction of these groups strongly suggests a taxonomy…Taxonomy…needs to be understood as a tool, not as an end in itself…The purpose…is…to consider genre in ways that open up new questions.' In this chapter, I have

outlined the questions that shaped this study, and excavated the background and assumptions behind widespread observations about the marvellous and its differences from observations about the fantastic in South African English fiction. However, these questions form a beginning, a framework for enquiry rather than a critical toolkit.

It should also be emphasized that although a great deal of this chapter has suggested the failings that result from identifying aspects of Tolkien's theory in fantastic works that differ in crucial ways from the Tolkien definition of fantasy, this thesis does not argue that sublimely desirable spaces in fantasy can only result from a complete application of Tolkien's paradigm. Therefore the first step in formulating a trajectory of analysis is not narrowing the parameters to Tolkien's argument. Rather, the first step involves appreciating the architecture of Tolkien's thinking, and broadening its applicability by exploring its significance in terms of subgenre. This assists in identifying specificity in the service of applicability, which in turn enables a more developed perspective from which to explore the machinery of the marvellous in relation to a range of works.

At no point, therefore, am I suggesting that Tolkien's understanding of fantasy is the one to which English South African authors making use of the fantastic should aspire. Nor am I suggesting that South African fantasies fail in so far as they do not fit Tolkien's chosen criteria. The aspiration, I believe, should be an openness to using the fantastic to portray South Africa in as positive and compelling a mode as the enchanting sublime, regardless of whether Tolkien's paradigm is wholly employed. There is also the point that an incomplete understanding of Tolkien's idea of fantasy, and Recovery in particular, has often resulted in the deployments of these concepts in the defence of many kinds of fantasy that do not fit Tolkien's definition. This, in turn, reveals an intriguing tendency to take certain aspects of

fantasy for granted in fantasy theory as a whole. A deeper exploration of these ideas may thus reveal not only the parameters of Tolkien's definition and the reasons for the absence of this kind of fantasy in South African literature, but also the unstable ideological underpinnings of Tolkien's theory itself.

For the purposes outlined above, the instruments of analysis used in this thesis have been largely informed by Mendlesohn's work *Strategies of Fantasy* (2008). Mendlesohn's criticism looks at subgenres in fantasy usefully in terms of identifiable structures that enable rhetorical strategies. Her work identifies 'four categories within the fantastic: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal…determined by the means by which the fantastic enters the narrated world' (Mendlesohn, 2008:xiv). These categories, she argues, allow for the identification of stylistic needs by which a fantastic text's aesthetic success can often be understood in new ways (Mendlesohn (2008:xv).

Of the four categories Mendlesohn identifies, the 'portal-quest' category functions as a revealing break-down of the strategies most commonly employed in the marvellous to evoke desirable spaces capable of effecting Recovery, enchantment and the pleasure of the sublime. The questions Mendlesohn's categories enable are therefore instrumental in analysing my selection of texts, namely:

> How do we get there? How do we meet the fantastic? In what ways does this meeting affect the narrative and rhetorical choices? How does this affect the choice of language and in what way does the choice of language affect the construction of the fantastic and the position of the reader? What ideological consequences emerge from the rhetorical structures? Perhaps the most crucial question is, Where are we asked to stand in relation to the fantastic? ...What I am interested in is the reader's relationship to the framework (Mendlesohn, 2008:xviii).

The rhetorical strategies identified by Mendlesohn are essential to an approach my thesis proposes in aiming to use fantasy criticism to ask new questions of South African fantastic texts, but my focus is even more specific than this. Firstly, in considering how the reader's relationship to the fantastic is formed by the text, my concern is on the effects of pleasure created by that relationship, and the significance of the South African space within that framework. Secondly, I will add to Mendlesohn's questions one crucial to an analysis of the South African space: how is otherness, derived from the magical or supernatural, positioned in relation to racial, cultural and spatial otherness, the other of postcolonial discourse? How are we asked to stand in relation to this other, and how does the fantastic affect that relationship in terms of desirability? Finally, there is one other structuring element that fantasy criticism brings to bear on these texts, and that is time.

Previously, I spent a great deal of time arguing against Sandner's (2011:2) theory that marvellous fantasy is haunted by an 'uncanny return' of superstitious belief in the magical. Marvellous fantasy, informed by the paradigm outlined by Tolkien in 'On Fairy-Stories', is crucially underpinned by its conceptualization of the fantastic as distinct from the real and relating to it only on a metaphoric or aesthetic level. For Tolkien personally, the magical may gesture to a Christian spirit world, but his language above all foregrounds the magical as a creative literary exercise, signifying a fictional transcendence, not a literal magical one. (As shown previously, this creates room for Attebery's [1992:22] validation of a transcendent reading in secular terms.) As I will show, this means that time enters into the marvellous aesthetic as a structuring element at a fundamental level.

On the one hand, the magical in marvellous fantasy, because it is associated with a superstitious past exploded by modern enlightenment, always evokes the archaic. The

inherently archaic nature of the fantastic thus forms one of the main sources of its pleasure, for it suggests a reach beyond a great distance (that of distant time) resulting in the seeming authentic feel of an otherness safely left behind. 'Modern subjectivity', defined in a narrow sense, is thus capable of participation in the transcendence at a safe remove, resulting in a wonder which sheds its sheen on ordinary things (Recovery) as the ultimate payoff. On the other hand, according to Mendlesohn (2008:9), this framework positions modern subjectivity in an essentially superior position to the 'superstitious past', as it embeds:

> …an assumption of unchangingness on the part of the indigenes. This kind of fantasy is essentially imperialist: only the hero is capable of change; fantasyland is orientalized into the 'unchanging past' …This allows the protagonist not merely to insist upon his interpretation as he relays it to us, but to insist that it will always be valid…

Fantasy criticism highlights time not only as a structuring component enabling desire, but as a potentially orientalising one, inscribing otherness. Sergei Prozorov's 2010 article 'The other as past and present: beyond the logic of "temporal othering" in IR Theory' is pertinent here. Prozorov (2010:1273-1274) interrogates what he refers to as 'the European project' in contemporary International Relations discourse, which he observes is

> …held to demonstrate the possibility for political identity to be constituted in the absence of any spatial delimitation of otherness. Instead, the Other of today's Europe is found in its own past, that is, the Europe of sovereign nation-states, founded on the principle of territorial exclusivity. Casting one's own past of fragmentation and conflict as the Other, from which it must delimit itself, contemporary Europe defines itself as an open and non-exclusive 'peace project' of self-transcendence that no longer requires a concrete figure of the territorial Other to constitute a positive entity.

Drawing on criticisms of this project, and in particular on the argument that 'the danger of temporal othering is that, in conjunction with spatial delimitation, it makes it possible for the Self to legitimise the domination of the Other on the grounds of the latter's "backwardness", "underdevelopment" and other modes of being "stuck in the past"', Prozorov's article (2010) argues further that temporal and spatial othering are in essence, indissociable.

To the extent that fantasyland embodies the superstitious past, it is positioned in relation to modern subjectivity in a form that is essentially functional. The fantasy world enables Recovery, or acts as a moral corrective, or as a cautionary figuration, but its purpose, ultimately, is determined by the needs of the modern subject for which it is a creative space; its potential lies in transformation for the hero. However, that the possibility for change excludes the 'indigenes' is a point on which I would contest Mendlesohn's argument. The worlds in which the 'indigenes' of fantasyland live often undergo great change in what can be a reflection of the historical change and uncertainty experienced by the modern subject. Often historical change is a major theme of these stories. This does not mean, however, that time does not function as an orientalising agent in these stories, but that its operations may be far more complicated and subtle than Mendlesohn's argument seems to allow. It depends, for example, on the nature of the analogues created between fantasyland and the real world. Rather than assume that 'fantasyland' as a whole is unchanging, I would ask what, in fantasyland, is unchanging? What are these changes? Are these changes positioned as desirable? Time is a key element in fantasy in the service of particular ends, whatever these ends might be.

The selection of texts analysed in this study has been based on the questions each one opens up about depictions of desirable South African inspired places in fiction making use of the fantastic. Each chapter concerns a different novel, analysing the aesthetic and rhetorical effects of the fantastic on space in each one. These effects are closely tied to the navigation of space in each narrative, meaning the order and way in which readers are introduced to spaces. Therefore, it has seemed appropriate to me to build my argument in each chapter along the same route, tracing effects created as a result of the spaces each novel opens with, how quests and journeys lead readers into later spaces, and where each novel ends.

King Solomon's Mines (1885) by H. Rider Haggard exists at the crossroads of several pertinent developments. Aside from the suggestiveness of its extraordinary ongoing fame and popularity, the novel's original success coincided with the heyday of British imperialist activity in Africa. It is a novel that embodies the height of the popularity of the African romance, a popularity that declined to nothing with mysterious swiftness shortly after its publication, its effective death coinciding with the end of Haggard's literary career and life. In terms of genre, the novel contains not a single appearance of the magical, yet it indulges in the world-building and quest structure that has become essential to the marvellous. Its author is British, yet the novel contains the only lasting approximation of a specifically South African inspired secondary world that functions as the primary setting of action, character development and the focus of desire. Existing at the location of so many significant developments renders the novel key to exploring questions about the development of the marvellous fantasy novel, the decline in depictions of South Africa as a space of enchantment, and the influence that imperialist baggage has had on depictions of the African space in the mode of the sublime.

The Heart of Redness (2000) by Zakes Mda is in some ways the most important work studied in this thesis. Its magical realist properties implicitly interrogate the binaries underlying the marvellous aesthetic whilst simultaneously appropriating marvellous properties to successfully effect enchantment and Recovery. Dismantling the certainties and culturally specific assumptions underlying what is fantasy and what is reality, the novel articulates the postcolonial critique of marvellous fantasy embodied by magical realism as a whole. However the novel does so whilst insisting on the importance of love of place and sublime pleasure and even subverts the imperialist legacy established by Haggard by pressing such characteristically marvellous effects into the service of self-reflexive national healing.

The Hidden Star (2006) by Sello Duiker is a children's novel and represents a South African mirror able to reflect the important role that children's literature has performed within the marvellous subgenre. As such, the study of this novel engages with the criticism associated with the marvellous that regards the positive qualities of marvellous fantasy as simplistic, escapist and fit only for children whilst at the same time questioning the value of the influence such literature wields over young minds. The novel also provides a unique angle in its own right on ways to depict desirable South African space, and a distinct perspective on the value of doing so for children. The chapter on this novel also builds on the questions opened by Mda's novel by exploring the importance of a magical realist perspective on the criticism of all fantastic art, but especially on any literary production within the South African context.

Chapter Two:

Rider Haggard at the Crossroads: The Legacy of the Imperial Romance

In 1875, British administration of the Natal Colony in what is today the Republic of South Africa was handed over to Sir Henry Bulwer whose staff included a nineteen-year-old named Henry Rider Haggard. Norman Etherington (1984:1), one of Haggard's many biographers, asserts that, at the time, no one

> …guessed that Africa was about to stir the vigorous imagination hid by [Haggard's] weak, dull exterior into extraordinary public activity, or that within a decade he would have written some of the most spectacularly successful novels to be published in late- Victorian England.

Haggard's novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, was published in 1885. One of the first of Haggard's famous African romances, the novel tells of the thrilling adventures of three British heroes, Allan Quartermain, Captain Good and Sir Henry Curtis, among the varied and dramatic landscapes of the African continent in the late nineteenth century. Quartermain, the wily lion-hunter, tells how he is enlisted in the service of Sir Henry Curtis to help find Curtis's brother, Neville, who has disappeared somewhere in the African interior. Although not the primary objective of the three adventurers, the quest to find Curtis's brother becomes intertwined with a treasure hunt to find the legendary wealth of King Solomon in search of which Neville has disappeared. Along the way, the three men are joined by the Zulu warrior Umbopa, who is eventually revealed as Ignosi, the long lost king of the legendary Kukuanas. Much of the novel is concerned with the battle the three white characters fight to free Kukuanaland from the tyranny of the usurper Twala, and to restore Ignosi's kingdom. Their triumph culminates in the discovery of the wealth of King Solomon and the eventual recovery of Curtis's brother after which the three heroes return home, Curtis and Good to England and

Quartermain to British-settled Natal; there the adventures are written down by Quartermain in a letter to Quartermain' s son, providing the framing device for the novel.

With *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard stirred the Victorian imagination into a passion for African adventures. 'Thirty-one thousand copies of *King Solomon's Mines* were sold in England alone within a year of its publication—a figure which put it among the hottest bestsellers at the time' and the novel was treated as the harbinger of 'a new trend in literature', the African romance (Etherington, 1984:9). Predating the marvellous fantasy form by several decades, Haggard's romances are nevertheless pertinent to an investigation of both the absence of the marvellous in the African fantastic *and* the absence of the African setting in the marvellous genre as a locus of subjectivity. Haggard's novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, may be considered the precursor to a sub-genre that never truly developed, the African marvellous fantasy.

Gerald Monsman (2006:71) claims that:

> Haggard is now known as 'the greatest adventure fantasist of all time' because his romance elements anticipated later commercial successes: Quatermain is the prototype for such popular adventurers as Indiana Jones, Bilbo Baggins, Tarzan, And John Carter of Mars…Haggard's new sort of fantasy, those tales of lost lands and races, may thus be thought of as emblematising the lost mystery and romantic spirit of the African continent itself.

The idea of Haggard's character Quatermain as a prototype for Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist of Tolkien's first fantasy *The Hobbit* (1937), highlights the relevance of Haggard's work to the development of marvellous fantasy. C.S. Lewis, another central figure in marvellous fantasy, openly acknowledged his debt to Haggard, while Haggard's influence on Tolkien has been inferred from Tolkien's 'use of maps, the trio of adventurers, [and] the quest for the Mines of Moria,' which are considered 'reminiscent of *King Solomon's Mines*' (Etherington,

1984:116). It is also worth noting that Bilbo, like Quartermain in *King Solomon's Mines*, does not see himself as a hero or as particularly brave, but is better known for resourcefulness than martial prowess and like Quartermain, spends a good part of a climactic battle knocked out. Of far greater significance to the marvellous subgenre than these plot details, however, is the way Haggard's narrative navigates space to enable desirability.

In this chapter I will explore the possibility that the two main (and intertwined) reasons that the popularity of Africa as a setting diminished so dramatically in the romance as it developed into the marvellous fantasy can be traced back to the Haggard legacy. I will consider that these are the same reasons that true marvellous fantasy never developed in African literature. One reason inheres in the failure of the African setting in Haggard's romances as a locus of subjectivity, and the second lies in its framing of time, as I will explain further on. It is well documented that the novel's imperialist ideology has implicated the Haggard legacy in a system of othering Africa and its peoples (Hultgren, 2011:646). This legacy may well have long since alienated the postcolonial sensibilities of those African writers considered to produce works worth publishing. But has the whole notion of a desirable African space been implicated as well? And if so, is the whole concept of marvellous fantasy irreconcilable with postcolonial ethics? How truly intertwined is marvellous fantasy as an aesthetic form with othering and imperialist rhetoric? I will be exploring these questions at some length in this chapter; however my primary focus is the depiction of desirable place in Haggard's work through the lens of fantasy criticism, specifically theory relating to the marvellous subgenre.

The significance of *King Solomon's Mines* is in its location at the crossroads of several developments. Firstly, the novel registers the moment at which a text classified as a romance

clearly exhibits features previously thought to distinguish the novel from the romance. Like any genre, the romance cannot be described in absolutes. Wendy Katz (1987:34) perhaps puts it best in her statement that it 'is most practical, then, to speak of romance in relative terms, in terms of degree or tendency.' It is worth noting that the romance shares with its descendent the marvellous fantasy an association with liberation through imagination from the constraints of realism. Although all fiction requires the interpretation and imaginative reconstructing of a perspective on 'reality', fantasy foregrounds its imaginative operations in its selection of deliberate signals of a departure from reality, affording the pleasure of escapism. Gary Wolfe (2012:11) notes that the

> …modern term 'fantasy novel', with its implication of a narrative which combines novelistic characterization and theme with…[Romantic] visionary imagination…might well have seemed an oxymoron to literary readers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early novels often presented themselves as histories…In contrast to these…were narratives that identified themselves as 'romances'…The modern fantasy novel…is in part an outgrowth of this…

Notably novelistic features include what Wolfe (2012:11) refers to as 'characterization and theme' as well as an approximation of the realistic novel's naturalism, what Brian Rosebury (2003:15) describes as a replication of real-world 'temporal and spatial order, [of] historico-geographical extension and density'. As Wolfe (2012:11) notes, the modern fantasy novel (marvellous fantasy) is in part an outgrowth of the adoption of novelistic features by the romance. The second significant development Haggard's novel showcases is the flourishing of the romance form in the age of empire, giving rise to the imperial romance sub-genre.

There are several reasons the romance found a natural home in the imperial text. The escapist impulse found a natural outlet in travels to the territories made available by Empire, territories which already existed on the periphery of the romance reader's immediate

knowledge, and thus functioned as a convenient canvas for the imagination. Lindy Stiebel (2001:37) notes:

> Certainly, the romance with its grand dreams of wish fulfilment, its deeds of heroism and its binary opposite, the fear of failure, of dark menace from without, suited the late nineteenth-century British mood well. Africa, in particular, the last unknown space on the map to be colonised, provided a suitable site for romantic dreaming for a home nation undergoing quite considerable domestic changes…

Haggard's African romances are therefore novels that exemplify the high appeal of Africa as a place of romance at a moment when the romance was developing recognizably into the marvellous fantasy. They also, however, constitute a body of work that mysteriously signifies the departure and demise of Africa as a main setting in marvellous fantasy, a genre which Gerald Gaylard (2005:45) observes never developed in African literature. Note that Gaylard's (2005:45) observation that 'it is rare to find a fully marvellous work of fantasy in African postcolonialism; there is no text that does not overtly refer to everyday reality in this genre' identifies the 'fully' marvellous fantasy as fantasy set in secondary worlds, that is settings set in worlds apart from 'everyday reality', a trend sparked by the publication of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, marvellous fantasy arguably coalesced around what are still considered its most recognizable characteristics in *The Lord of the Rings* published between 1954 and 1955 (Attebery, 1992:14). This decade notably saw the beginnings of the last unravelling of the British Empire, an unravelling that would accelerate in the 1960s. While this overlap in dates would seem to explain a development in marvellous fantasy expressive of a disillusionment with the desires that made the lands of empire, and Africa specifically, such a suitable locale for the romance, the mystery is compounded by the continuities of those desires suggested in the modern fantasy novel. Specifically, the

development of marvellous fantasy has consistently reiterated a desire for a return to an age of empire, a desire that is most consistently expressed in a love of unexplored *place*, of blank spaces around maps signifying cultures and lands that have yet to be discovered.

In marvellous fantasies, the drive for discovery is almost always intertwined with themes of invasion, conquest and cultural conflict. While these themes are not central to all marvellous fantasies, a list of examples of such works would be extensive. A prominent example enjoying an unprecedented level of popularity at the time of the writing of this thesis is George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-2011), better known as its television serial adaptation *A Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) (Hardy, 2015:413). At the level of plot alone, Martin's series is about the impending invasion by Daenerys Targaryen of Westeros, a continent conquered by her ancestors centuries before. The story unfolds against a backdrop of civil war and the history of a series of invasions that have resulted in the complex composition of Westerosi peoples and cultures.

Writing about fantasy at the significant moment of the 1950s, both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were emphatic that the primary ingredient of fantasy is desirability. Specifically, their writings suggest that the desire for contact with other lands and cultures that distinguished the imperial romance are as important as the otherness of magic in rendering the settings of fantasy enchanting. Pointing out that he had no personal desire for the fantastical adventures of Lewis Caroll's *Alice* books, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:41) notes: 'Red Indians were better: there were bows and arrows (I had and have a wholly unsatisfied desire to shoot well with a bow), and strange languages, and glimpses of an archaic mode of life, and, above all, forests in such stories'. Using a similar reference to 'Red Indians', Lewis (Zambreno, 2005:264) argues that the value in such tales was the 'whole world to which it

belonged--the snow and the snow-shoes, beavers and canoes, war-paths and wigwams, and Hiawatha names', that is, the otherness of a world rendered complete in itself.

Stiebel (2001:42) observes that it is this exact appeal that 'Haggard creates in his African romances—an "Africannery" complete with a desire-laden latent world of heat, big game, dangerous natives, vast limitless horizons, in short the dream landscape of empire…'. Yet, after Haggard, the African setting as the primary landscape of a marvellous fantasy became rare, and certainly did not appear in the novels of either Lewis or Tolkien. Since the 1950s, the fictional worlds of marvellous fantasy have been overwhelmingly medieval and European in flavour (Hunt, 2001:4). Suggestions of a pseudo-African space, like the lands of Harad in *The Lord of the Rings* or the Summer Isles in *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-2011) by George R.R. Martin, do sometimes occur. Lions and leopards appear incongruously amid the pseudo-English forests, primroses and daffodils of Lewis's (1950) Narnia, and 'oliphaunts' make a brief appearance in *The Lord of the Rings* as harbingers of an invasion by a cruel race of dark skinned people from a vaguely defined southern region. However, these at best exist merely to suggest a further outlying layer of exotica and recognisably African spaces are never the home of primary protagonists.

Thus it seems that as the British Empire dissolved, the romance impulse, as it was channelled into fantasy, turned away from Empire and towards imaginative reconfigurations of the home space. These appear to have taken the form of romantic and heroic recreations of the European medieval past. Manlove (1983:93) locates this impulse within a 'nostalgia for a world simpler, less populated, better ordered and more natural than the writer's own'. Attebery (1994:33) similarly traces the preference for European medieval settings to a desire for order. But these interpretations miss the significance of the fact that these settings are

exotic renderings of home and self, and the exotic is a factor upon which desirability depends. They are 'exotic settings, divorced from the real world' as Raymond Thompson (1982:213) phrases it. And yet these settings are not, as in the imperial romance, entirely divorced from European identity. In this way the spiritual rewards of the transcendent were sought in a self-exoticising exercise that became central to the marvellous fantasy aesthetic, reflected in the most ubiquitous of marvellous fantasy settings, the secondary world.

The term 'secondary world', coined by Tolkien ([1964] 2001:37), signifies a place and time that is wholly fictional, yet secondary only to the real world in complexity and inner-consistency, that is, secondary only to the real world in its 'realism'. The pertinence of the term lies in its other meaning; the word secondary denotes the reimagining of something previously known, of home. 'Modern fantasy', says Rosemary Jackson (1981:4), 'is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance.' In a departure from fairy tale, another aesthetic antecedent to fantasy within the family of the romance, 'secondary' replaced the 'land far, far away' of the fairy tale. As a spatial figuration, 'far, far away' easily translated the fairy tale place of romance into the faraway places of empire within the imperial novel. Thus the predominance of the secondary world as a setting in marvellous fantasy appears to have signalled the end of romantic imaginings situated in the real world, and especially those primarily set in the far-flung territories of Empire.

While Tolkien in his reference to Red Indians suggests the need to *replicate* the wholeness and otherness of exotic lands in the rendering of fantasy worlds, he also sternly distinguished fantasy from 'traveller's tales' that report 'marvels to be seen in this mortal world in some region of our own time and space' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:12). That said, it is significant to note that Haggard's work did not end the African romance in any form whatsoever. Stiebel's

(2001) work on the influence of Haggard's African topography concludes, for example, with a telling overview of later manifestations of several facets of the African romance in novels appearing well into the twentieth century, but these are not fantasy novels. Moreover, the legacy of these novels has been a tendency to showcase Africa as a setting for energetic, sensationalised plot and exotic spectacle. Writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Stiebel (2001:122-123) sees this development culminating in the most shallow and consumer-driven approximation of the fantasy genre, the theme park:

> In the 1990s, the Haggard legacy…is reduced to the glitzy theme park of the Lost City and its Palace, located in what was the apartheid homeland state of Bophuthatswana…The Lost City in an ersatz manner draws on the discourse of Africanism…together with that discourse's historical antecedents and successors—the narratives of early explorers to Africa, the adventure stories of the late nineteenth century (especially those of Haggard), the spectacular World Fairs and Exhibitions of Haggard's day, the blood-soaked, dangerous Africa of Cloete's potboilers, the novels of Wilbur Smith, the evergreen if worn myth of 'Africa-as-Paradise,' and simultaneously as a heart of darkness….It could even be said that some of the tensions of the imperialist age that found their expression in Haggard's fictional African topography can also be seen in The Lost City, but they have lost their subtlety and become banal and self-conscious…

The vulgar and banal glitz of the theme park aesthetic is certainly at the farthest end of the sublime seriousness of the wonder and desirability that characterises the marvellous fantasy.

In my introduction, I discuss the centrality of the desirability of place to the marvellous paradigm and delineate this desirability as informed essentially by enchantment and the aesthetic of the sublime. My introductory chapter also suggests that Felicity Wood's use of Tolkien's concept of Recovery in South African fantastic works is misapplied. Recovery, I argue, is dependent on the desirability of place effected by a more holistic incorporation of the marvellous, something missing from Wood's selection of South African works. In this chapter, I intend to analyse the depiction of a South African space in *King Solomon's Mines*, a narrative that does incorporate more of a marvellous paradigm. While this narrative depicts

a desirable South African space in a positive, energising way, rooted in the exhilaration afforded by the sublime, my analysis shows that such a work is dependent on various layers of othering in the service of Victorian subjectivity. One thing I wish to establish at the outset: while Haggard's position as a member of the British landed gentry and hence an outsider to South Africa undoubtedly affects his work and in particular his depiction of South African space, I have preferred to keep the focus on the position of Haggard's texts in literary culture rather than on the author's view as an individual. That said, while very little attention is paid to Haggard's position as an individual, a lot of attention is paid to the novel's origin in a Victorian perspective, its resonance with Victorian readers and subsequent influence on literary trends. This emphasis on the position of texts within the development of literary trends, rather than a focus on individual authors, is the approach I have taken with all of the texts under study. This approach, I hope to show, is more supportive of an investigation of the status of genre (in this case marvellous fantasy) in the South African context in relation to the positioning of otherness.

The identification and positioning of otherness, whether located in race or the transcendent, is always determined by the need to define and serve subjectivity. Edward Said (2003:71) argued of Orientalism that 'we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language used to depict the Orient is inaccurate, but because it is not even trying to be accurate.' It is perhaps more correct to say that the depiction of otherness draws on, and may even rely upon, notions of what is accurate in order to function usefully to support desired definitions of subjectivity. According to Stiebel (2001:6-7):

> …the broad precepts of Said's thesis on Orientalism…can have wider application than to the Orient alone… in the same way as the Orient was constructed by the West and cast in the role of subjugated (yet desirable) Other, the West in a comparable display of power and through a similarly

> complex web of representations constructed a discourse of 'Africanism'. Such a discourse also had more to reveal about Europe in the late nineteenth century than about any actual Africa.

Mendelsohn (2008:9) asserts that the portal quest fantasy structure ubiquitous in marvellous fantasy 'is essentially imperialist' because it is determined by a similar function. Marvellous fantasy celebrates the experience of place through endowing it with the numinous, and wonder is the pleasure that results from the love of worlds evident in these stories. According to Mendelsohn (2008:9) the same rhetorical strategies in marvellous fantasy used to celebrate place through sustaining wonder also orientalise fantasyland 'into the "unchanging past"', render landscape a passive yielder to the authoritative interpretation that is imposed upon it, and empower only the hero with the ability to change. While the structure in marvellous fantasy tends to other the European medieval past in order to serve the needs of modern subjectivity, fantasy, time, and race interact together in the imperial romance to construct a more complex other.

For Victorians, the idea of Africa served a number of purposes. 'Africa,' Stiebel (2001:37-38) states, '…the last unknown space on the map to be colonised, provided a suitable site for romantic dreaming for a home nation undergoing quite considerable domestic changes…. What Haggard regrets is the loss of freedom to roam the land, a pre-industrial dream now curtailed by the onset of mining capitalism'. Wendy Katz (1987:30-31) notes that

> the escapist character of Haggard's romances can also be related to a personal sense of frustration with his society's growing attachment to machines, industry, and urban living…For those like Haggard, who faced the passing of a rural existence, the imperial landscape became more and more appealing. One could easily transfer one's sympathies to the non-industrial—hence more satisfying and enlivening—refuse of Empire.

Gerald Monsman (2006:11-12), reading in terms of the journey-ordeal structure identified by Joseph Campbell, sees 'a newly empowered identity for the reader of Haggard's work, a

reborn sense of self in which the rigors of colonial life, as earlier noted, are presented as an antidote to England's increasing softness.' In marvellous fantasy, the preference for pseudo-medieval settings expresses a nostalgia for a similar pre-industrial reality. Specifically, the continued preference in this genre for the trappings of medieval life expresses an association of heroic action with a pre-industrial mentality. Heroic action, in turn, requires peril and anxiety which then becomes associated with the site of heroic action. According to Stiebel (2001:45), the desire for Africa in the imperial romance lies in its role as source of both anxiety and pleasure; this tension 'defines the desire of imperial romance: to show the hero triumphant over land and people but without eliminating the thrill of risk and danger, the great unknown…' The sustained balance between pleasure and peril, desire and fear, is key to the sublime aesthetic of the imperial romance, a tightrope the skilful writer of marvellous fantasy must also walk. Idealised place in marvellous fantasy is defined, not by perfection, but by invigorating desirability driven by the same complexity of pleasure and peril that characterises the romance.

There is thus a tension between the paradoxical desire for both power and peril underlying the events depicted in both imperial romances and marvellous fantasies. Curiously, this tension renders the Africa of the imperial romance strangely in conflict with the imperial impulse itself. For Stiebel, this conflict is the source of a nostalgic tone in Haggard's romances for an Africa that Gerald Monsman (2006) notes was already vanishing when Haggard's romance, *King Solomon's Mines* was published in 1885. Monsman (2006:44) remarks that, picturing this 'tarnished old Africa in the opening decades of the new twentieth century, Haggard betrays an immense disillusionment; indeed, because the old Africa had already been disappearing gradually long before the end of the nineteenth century, Haggard

perceived not only that it had faded but that it would soon would be forgotten. He could not let that happen.' Stiebel (2001:19) collaborates this view with the significant observation that

> In its more positive aspect of wish-fulfilment, Africa in the nineteenth century was portrayed as paradisal, its wide, open spaces teeming with game. In particular, the South Africa of the early nineteenth century contrasted favourably with the 'White Man's Grave' of West Africa.
>
> Such a view of Africa stressed a positive primeval aspect; an unspoiled place where the European male could make a fresh start, test himself against physical (and unspoken psychological) challenges, and emerge victorious. By the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, identified as the culmination of the 'scramble for Africa,' a parallel, contradictory, pessimistic image of Africa as a place of darkness was forming in the public imagination.

These observations add a significant layer of complexity to the desirability of Africa as an idea. Katz (1987:31) asserts that Africa was still felt to 'hold out the promise of romance in life itself' to Victorian readers, yet the desirability of romantic Africa was already tinged with the nostalgia and wishful thinking brought about by a sense of its impending loss. To Victorians, Africa was already experiencing a historical encroachment similar to the tumultuous developments occurring in Europe.

Marvellous fantasy later responded to such developments by adapting European settings as fully separable secondary worlds. Secondary worlds can perform many functions but inherent in such constructs is their potential for projections of nostalgia for a self-image long lost that simultaneously functions as a vision embodying desired change. However, the clamour of realism apparently rendered Africa unusable for similar secondary world constructions in fantasy. True African secondary world fantasies simply never materialised as an identifiable subgenre.

In South Africa particularly, the period between the publication of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* in 1937 and *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954-1955 and what Edward James (2012:62) refers to as

the subsequent 'explosion of genre fantasy' coincided with the formal implementation of apartheid by the Nationalist government. Njabulo Ndebele (1991), in his essay 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary', argues that South African literature at the height of apartheid had been so imaginatively impoverished that its rigid adherence to realism had deteriorated into a kind of reportage of spectacle void of any human complexity. The complete absence of true South African secondary world fantasy can be seen as the most extreme result of this rigid adherence to realism.

Stiebel (2001:119) notes a reluctance to step outside the confines of realism even in the bestselling action adventure novels of Wilbur Smith and speculates that 'this is because in reality political struggles in the second half of the twentieth century in South Africa have been brought to the foreground so publicly as to make them hard to ignore.' But this does not seem to be a fully satisfactory account for why the romance in the specific form of the marvellous fantasy seems to be considered so irreconcilable with the South African setting. The answer is perhaps best sought in *King Solomon's Mines*, a novel that has a near rendering of a pseudo-African secondary world, a landscape that moreover forms the primary setting for action, thematic development and Tolkien's conceptualisation of Recovery.

Desirability in *King Solomon's Mines* cannot be examined without considering its determining romance framing. The three critics I have quoted, Lindy Stiebel, Wendy Katz and Gerald Monsman represent three positions on the romance aspects of *King Solomon's Mines* that may form a skeletal frame for an analysis utilizing the tools of marvellous fantasy theory. The juxtapositions between these varying positions on the romance aspects of the novel are resolved in an unexpected way with the perspective on time that marvellous criticism brings to the analysis, as I explain below.

Of the three, Wendy Katz is the most dismissive, and her criticism comes closest to objections raised against the marvellous fantasy subgenre as a whole. To Katz (1987:34), the romance is, 'to begin with, less than true to life, varying in gradation from writer to writer…In the romance, experience does not reveal truth so much as validate it. For this reason, a lack of vigorous intellectual struggle, if not anti-intellectualism, prevails.' Mendlesohn (2008:13-14) objects to exactly this kind of anti-intellectualism in the marvellous fantasy in particular, locating its orientalising nature in what she considers its inherently authoritarian mode, and arguing that this kind of narrative is 'uninterruptible, unquestionable and…embodies…history as inarguable'. Most significantly, to Katz (1987:45), the imaginative 'freedom and expansiveness' of the romance renders it prone to the worst excesses of imperialist propaganda:

> It can be controlled and manipulated so easily that it can be made to do the romancer's ideological bidding. The allegorical nature of romance has an infinite capacity for political propagandizing. Haggard's romances, even when not explicit propaganda for Empire, often contain political (especially militaristic) allusions' (Katz, 1987:45).

In contrast, Monsman (2006:78), partly in a direct response to criticism by Katz, argues that the imaginative freedom of the romance in the novel allows for 'a utopian alternative to the British bungling of African settlement.' Furthermore, in Monsman's (2006:95-97) internally consistent but somewhat laboured mythopoeic reading of the novel, Haggard repudiates 'the Victorian imperial stereotype of subjugated tribes, especially notions of wealth created by trade' and the African setting embodies a 'national regeneration linked to the vegetation cycle' which is denied to the English protagonists.

Walking the middle-ground between these two positions is Stiebel, who focuses on irreconcilable tensions in the novel between Africa as a romance setting and the imperial impulse. 'There is nostalgia' says Stiebel (2001:38, 58), for 'an Africa untamed and unknown

yet ripe with promise…yet this nostalgia contradicts Haggard the imperialist who encouraged the settlement of the colonies by Englishmen, who stressed the mother country's "civilising" role in the land…It is a debate between Haggard the Victorian imperialist and Haggard the romance writer that is unresolvable…'

In this chapter, I will consider all three of these positions, arguing that Haggard does go some way towards resolving the tension identified by Stiebel, without necessarily resolving the conflict, through the role that time plays in his novels. Seen through the lens of fantasy criticism, time in the novel is highlighted as a structuring component in telling ways. By sealing off a vision of Africa as a fantasyland from the ravages of historical time, the novel enacts through plot what Haggard's romances did in real life: it preserves a desirable Africa as a fiction that need not interfere with the march of imperial progress. This use of time together with the framing device of the novel is a crucial factor in why Kukuanaland, while prefiguring significant features of the secondary world, fails as a viable model for later African marvellous fantasy.

As in marvellous fantasy, *King Solomon's Mines* is a novel that celebrates the experience of place with a narrative style that favours wonder-infused detail description and a narrative structure that functions to sustain that wonder. As I will show, there are structural elements in this narrative, aside from the quest trajectory, that are strikingly similar to the features characteristic of portal fantasy and its accompanying setting, the secondary world. Not only does the novel celebrate the wonder of space, as in the marvellous, but it does so using the same rhetorical strategies that Mendelsohn identifies in the portal quest fantasy. In its prefiguring of the portal-quest, the structure most characteristic of the marvellous fantasy, the novel underlines the similarities between this and the imperial adventure novel.

The quest structure in the novel is evident within the opening pages as the narrator and protagonist, Allan Quartermain, tells how he is enlisted in the service of Sir Henry Curtis to help find Curtis's brother, Neville, who has disappeared somewhere in the African interior. Related to the quest to find Curtis's brother is the treasure hunt to find the legendary wealth of King Solomon in search of which Neville has disappeared. As Mendelsohn (2008:4) notes of the marvellous fantasy, the

> …quest is a process, in which the object sought may or may not be a mere token of reward. The real reward is moral growth and/or admission into the kingdom, or redemption…The process of the journey is then shaped by a metaphorized and moral geography—physical delineation of what Attebery describes as a 'sphere of significance'—that in the twentieth century mutates into the elaborate and moralized cartography of genre fantasy.

In fantasy criticism, *King Solomon's Mines* is not considered a marvellous fantasy and has been lodged in the lost world subgenre (Wolfe, 2012:15). Characteristic of the Lost World novel is a plot that involves the discovery of a civilization that has isolated itself for centuries. Because such worlds are simply 'lost' but exist within a reality we recognize from our world, they are not considered secondary worlds in the tradition of Middle-earth or Narnia. However, while *King Solomon's Mines* may seem different from marvellous fantasies in its otherworld setup, it shares similarities with the portal quest narrative in terms of the structural aspects that determine the effectiveness of its rhetorical strategies.

In her identification of the portal-quest fantasy structure, Mendelsohn (2008:xix) argues that actual portals are not a necessary feature of these narratives. Contrary to what the term portal fantasy itself suggests, that is the notion that the transitional space is a magical portal 'from "our" world to the fantastic', Mendlesohn (2008: xix) argues that the 'portal fantasy is about entry, transition, and negotiation'. In this structure, wonder is generated in the movement of a protagonist from a

> …mundane life—in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist)—into direct contact with the fantastic, through which she transitions, to the point of negotiation with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm (Mendlesohn 2008: xix-xx).

King Solomon's Mines is primarily a narration of the adventures of three British heroes, Quartermain, Curtis and Curtis's friend, Captain John Good. Quatermain, Curtis and Good are motivated by their quest to move from the familiar space of British-settled South Africa into the perilous, unchartered territory of the African north, cross a desert, and discover the mythically charged and entirely fictional country of Kukuanaland. Mendlesohn's focus on 'entry, transition and negotiation' in her distinctions between fantasy structures, instead of shallow aesthetic choices such as portals, allows for a revealing analysis of Kukuanaland as a fantastic realm similar to the secondary fantasy-world of the portal-quest novel.

It is important to note at this point that the fantastic nature of Kukuanaland is not based on any true appearance of the magical, but on its status as an entirely imaginative construction inspiring wonder. To put it simply, despite its apparent differences, Kukuanaland is a product of world-building similar to Middle-earth in *The Lord of the Rings* or Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), novels considered to be archetypal marvellous fantasies and typical portal quest narratives.

Wonder is very much rooted in the novel's topography and its navigation of the world. Monsman (2006: 84) observes of the setting of the novel that:

> Sitandra's Kraal with its encompassing rivers, the trio's last outpost before the desert, is on old maps of Rhodesia, located in present-day central Zambia; but beyond this point Haggard's topography becomes mythopoeic—or, as others somewhat too hastily conclude, reflects the stereotypes of imperialist romanticism.

The shift to a mythopoeic mode of mapping is significant in terms of how the topography is read from this point onwards. Although Kukuanaland may correspond spatially with historical African spaces, it should not be interpreted primarily as such. Furthermore, the argument posited in this chapter is that through the spatial structure of the novel that balances South Africa at the start of the journey against Kukuanaland at the end, and the specifically South African comparisons made with Kukuanaland by Quatermain the narrator, the novel positions Kukunaland as a mythopoeic reflection of South Africa specifically. I will expand on this further as I unpack the depiction of Kukuanaland later in the chapter.

The movement from the known to the mythopoeic, with all the rhetorical effects distinctive of the marvellous fantasy, are the important details that establish this narrative's proximity to the marvellous. The application of those similarities, as well as its differences from that form, to an African landscape is the subject of this chapter. Moreover, there is a specific focus on these similarities as they overlap with how imperialist romanticism was later adapted within the marvellous. What is significant and indicative about this structure, according to Mendlesohn (2008:xx), are the rhetorical strategies enabled by a particular encounter with the fantastic (in this case, Kukuanaland). These rhetorical strategies include the 'technique' and 'effect on language' which results in the author being forced 'to describe and explain what is seen by the point of view character as she negotiates the world'. The orientalising potential Mendlesohn detects in marvellous fantasy has aesthetic links to the encounter with the foreign characteristic of Haggard's imperial romances. Her (2008:xix) observation that the language of the portal fantasy is 'is often elaborate, but it is the elaboration of the *anthropologist* [my emphasis]…intensely descriptive and exploratory rather than assumptive' is particularly reflective of the systems of knowledge (such as anthropology) from which Orientalist (in this case Africanist) discourse was constructed.

Various instances of othering Africa are also key to the way the novel sustains wonder. In *King Solomon's Mines*, the pleasure of the tale is very much dependent on the novelty of what is described, combined with the sublime aesthetic inherent in the scale of the sheer extraordinary. 'I am going to tell the strangest story that I remember,' Quartermain promises at the very beginning of the novel (Haggard 2010 [1885]:4). The effect is heightened, rather than undermined, by the fact that Quatermain establishes himself as someone who is already accustomed to adventure due to simply making a living in Africa: 'At an age when other boys are at school I was earning my living in the old Colony and Natal. I have been trading, hunting, fighting or exploring ever since' are the sentences with which Quatermain introduces himself (Haggard 2010 [1885]:3). A crucial point is that the effect created here is both thrilling and comfortingly familiar. Quatermain's opening declaration draws on a tradition of representation that is based on a previously established and familiar mode of relating to the African space. Stiebel (2001:xi) points out that while Haggard created a 'generic African topography in his Romances', he was also himself influenced by the discourse of Africanism 'of his day, which had been constructed over a period of time by Europe for Europe, as Said argued…and would have come to Africa with some ideas of what he would find there' (Stiebel, 2001:8).

In general, it is a similar kind of sustained balance between the familiar exotic and the entirely new that lies at the heart of the success of marvellous fantasy, and what tends to curtail the subversive potential of works in the sub-genre. Marvellous fantasies rarely depict the truly bizarre; strangeness manifests most often in the form of familiar categories of otherness: the medieval, the magical, and/or the natives who are unlike the subject-hero but conform to what has previously been told about them. Its worlds are strange and mysterious

but in the main the setting resonates with a previously established category of the strange so as not to effect total alienation.

Likewise, the category of the exotic in the African Romance is a familiar one, and the opening of *King Solomon's Mines* does a great deal to establish the African setting as resonant with popular Victorian notions of Africa as a land of exotica, adventure and wealth. The first paragraph is peppered with allusions to hunting lions, foreign languages, and ivory, elements that Victorian readers would expect to find there. Peril is a significant component, contributing the spice of adventure, delivered in a thrillingly casual tone that highlights how commonplace thrills are in Africa.

The opening descriptions of the novel also serve to demarcate even the frame space (South Africa) of the novel as 'other', as exotic, something the frame space shares with Kukuanaland. Similarity and analogical connections between the frame space and mythopoeic realm of the marvellous fantasy are largely unaddressed in Mendelsohn's paradigm but they have both ideological and aesthetic importance. In her analysis of the function of the frame space in quest fantasies, Mendelsohn's emphasis is on contrast: 'The otherworld of the portal fantasy relies on the contrast with the frame world, on the world from which we begin the adventure… [The] fantastic can be intensified if contrasted with the most mundane Real possible' (Mendelsohn, 2008:21-28).

However, Tolkien's concept of Recovery suggests the relationship between the frame world and the fantastic is one that enables clarity and appreciation of the former. Both functions are possible; while contrast may be one effect, another is a form of emphasis, or what may better be termed deepening. Haggard's mapping of South Africa vis-à-vis Kukuanaland contains

evidence of both contrast and Recovery in this relationship. While there is much in imperial South Africa that is ugly and inefficient, aspects of South Africa have a charm that is suggestively echoed in Kukuanaland, where these effects are deepened. Below is an early description of South Africa by Quartermain:

> At last, one beautiful evening in January, which is our hottest month, we steamed past the coast of Natal, expecting to make Durban Point by sunset. It is a lovely coast all along from East London, with its red sandhills and wide sweeps of vivid green, dotted here and there with Kafir kraals, and bordered by a ribbon of white surf, which spouts up in pillars of foam where it hits the rocks. But just before you come to Durban there is a peculiar richness about the landscape. There are the sheer kloofs cut in the hills by the rushing rains of centuries, down which the rivers sparkle; there is the deepest green of the bush, growing as God planted it, and the other greens of the mealie gardens and the sugar patches, while now and again a white house, smiling out at the placid sea, puts a finish and gives an air of homeliness to the scene. For to my mind, however beautiful a view may be, it requires the presence of man to make it complete, but perhaps that is because I have lived so much in the wilderness, and therefore know the value of civilisation, though to be sure it drives away the game (Haggard 2010 [1885]:24).

The landscape described above epitomises the tensions between the desire for the freedom and wildness of an unspoiled Africa vs an imperialist ideal. Its beauty has a primeval aspect, 'growing as God planted it,' and showing the centuries-long work of both nature and time, but it is enhanced, not diminished, by domestication. Quatermain's concluding remarks on how the wilderness only enhances the appreciation of civilization, with the underlying implication that the wilderness is a necessary condition for that purpose, is a summary of the novel's structuring dilemma. Settled South Africa's very proximity to the wilderness anticipates adventure; the wilderness functions to enhance the potency of the colours and comforts of civilisation. This is the very definition of Tolkien's Recovery, the function of which is to restore the sublime wonder to the ordinary through proximity to the extraordinary.

Moreover, the civilised space as a frame world sets the stakes for the coming adventure by establishing the relatively safe features of home, British-settled South Africa. The trials of the wilderness do not distort the narrative into horror because in addition to being the beginning point of the adventure, the frame space is also the point of happy return. Even the joke about how civilization's one drawback is that 'it drives away the game' in the midst of a paragraph about the superiority of civilization indicates the tension between these opposing and yet mutually dependent values. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that these opening scenes do not simply anticipate the luminous beauties of Kukuanaland; they in themselves come very close to it. Quartermain reflects on nightfall in South Africa:

> Altogether it was a perfect night, such a night as you sometimes get in Southern Africa, and it threw a garment of peace over everybody as the moon threw a garment of silver over everything. Even the great bulldog, belonging to a sporting passenger, seemed to yield to its gentle influences, and forgetting his yearning to come to close quarters with the baboon in a cage on the foc'sle, snored happily at the door of the cabin, dreaming no doubt that he had finished him, and happy in his dream (Haggard 2010 [1885]:25).

The informative tone in Quatermain's descriptions serves as a reminder that this safe haven is still an exotic locale, unfamiliar and remote to the experience of many Victorian readers, and other to the familiarity of home. The image of the dreaming dog casts Africa as a restful dreamscape in contrast with the nightmare always underlying Africa-as-adventure. 'Haggard,' notes Stiebel (2001:17) 'uses the quest romance in [a] positive energizing sense…but also unwittingly explores the reverse side of the Victorian dream metaphor: its nightmares'. Sustaining the balance between desire and anxiety is the key to rendering successful adventure while simultaneously restricting the story's slip into either horror or boring domesticity. As Stiebel (2001:45) comments, to 'destroy the source of anxiety is to remove the impetus for romance in which the hero has to have an Other (land, people, animals) to prove himself against…'. As noted previously, it is Africa as a nightmare

landscape that eventually dominated in the global imaginary; this might be one of the reasons that made it unpopular as a model for the primary setting of secondary world fantasy.

Mendelsohn's central focus in her analysis of the frame space in quest fantasies is the closed narrative structure, which, she argues, is embedded within the framing. Mendlesohn (2008:5) characterises this closed structure as the 'club narrative, a cosy discourse that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and that profoundly shaped the portal-quest fantasy in the second half of the twentieth century'. Noteworthy is the date of emergence (the end of the nineteenth century) which coincides with the first publication of *King Solomon's Mines* and the high point of the imperial romance's popularity. The coincidence of date is even more significant considering Mendlesohn traces the origin of the orientalist rhetoric in marvellous fantasy to a Victorian structuring control:

> In the club story, the storyteller, whatever his designation, is possessed of two essential qualities: he is uninterruptible and incontestable; and the narrative as it is downloaded is essentially closed…The club narrative is diegetic, a denial of discourse, an assertion of a particular type of Victorian masculinity…combined with a stature signalled by the single-voiced and impervious authority (Mendlesohn, 2008: 6).

In the novel, it is Quatermain who takes the position of the story-teller; he is also the guide the other characters must rely upon to get to the legendary mines and, unintentionally, Kukuanaland. It is thus important for Quatermain to establish his integrity, and hence stature, very early on in the novel. The framing of the story goes some way to accomplishing this; it is, as Mendlesohn (2008:6) notes is typical of this structure, '*recounted* as if it has happened in the past', and hence is already entrenched as true.

Haggard further embeds the authority of Quatermain's narration in the integrity of his character. In an early episode, Curtis and Good doubt the veracity of Quatermain's account of

his encounter with the legend of the mines. This considerably offends Quatermain, who reflects that he does not 'like to be thought one of those silly fellows who consider it witty to tell lies, and who are for ever boasting to newcomers of extraordinary hunting adventures which never happened…' (Haggard 2010 [1885]:19). Here is the significant world-building detail Haggard stresses that within a realm containing many extraordinary tales that may or may not be true, *one* story, the story at stake, is a true one. The technique has the double purpose of wrapping the setting in lore and legend, underlining its otherness *and* enriching the texture of its realism. It also focalises the trajectory of the tale that will afford meaning within a mesh of other tales and extraordinary events that overlie the setting.

Quatermain's integrity here becomes the anchor for a true, though extraordinary, tale and is also intertwined with the concern with identity that runs throughout the narrative. The quality of the gentleman becomes the differentiating factor between the spiritual qualities Haggard (Stiebel, 2001:40) believed were inherent in romance and the shallow thrill extractable from a 'yarn'. A yarn in this sense may be understood as both a tale that is made up, a lie, and implicitly, an adventure spun by those who are not gentlemen, men who are insensitive to the spiritual rewards of the romance. Moreover, as Mendelsohn is at pains to emphasise, this technique aids in shutting down the multiplicity of interpretation through a queer circular logic: Quatermain's authority as sole interpreter of the tale is established within the tale that he tells. The 'consequence for the author is that in order to preserve this sense, any history narrated must be done so in an authoritative fashion…Knowledge is fixed and it is *recursive*…' (Mendelsohn, 2008:16).

Authoritative interpretation has roots in many forms of imperialist codification, notably naming and mapping. Stiebel (2001:15) observes how these forms, including Romance

fiction, were instrumental in the formation of a dominant image of Africa that has persisted in the global imaginary. The two distinctive aspects of this imagery, like the secondary world in portal quest narratives, are that it is unchanging and that it serves the definition and positioning of subjectivity.

> Both naming and classifying were part of the growing manifest discourse of 'Africanism' of the time, as was the related practice of mapping. A map is a source of power through knowledge; it is the imposition of order on the unknown but suspected disorder of the blank page. It is never a neutral activity, for the mapper brings a subjective gaze to bear upon the space and selects that which is important to be mapped according to a previously established subjective criteria… (Stiebel, 2001:13)

The other important feature to note about the opening of the novel is the contrast set up between the excitement of Haggard's life and the 'other boys' at home in England who spend their time at school. This is the first signal in the novel of a sense that masculine identity will somehow be remade, or rediscovered, in the pages of Haggard's story, in the African space, a service that benefits not an African but a foreign subjectivity.

Stiebel's (2001:126) overview of Haggard's influence on later representations of Africa in popular literature concludes that the 'world has one role for Africa—as a destiny for other people's expeditions'. As I have indicated, Monsman and Katz represent opposing positions on how subjectivity is positioned and privileged in the novel, a debate that can be boiled down to whose expedition the novel frames within the African setting. In one sense, the Eurocentric perspective in the novel is a given; the story's intended audience is understood to be comprised exclusively of Victorian readers at home and elsewhere. The audience is focalized in the framing device that sets up the tale as a memoir written for Quartermain's son 'at home', a framing device which also emphasises the distance and contrast between Africa and 'home' whilst simultaneously serving as the link between the two. Katz (1987: 83) argues that it is 'precisely this severance from home which, for Haggard, enables the

Englishman to understand what it means to be English…[The Englishman] needs Africa, India, or some distant Ruritania to act out the role of his destiny.' However, from another perspective, the central role of the English hero seems undermined by the entrance into the tale of a parallel black African protagonist, Umbopa, with a parallel quest. Umbopa's quest, moreover, is one that seems to engulf and supersede the quest to find Curtis's brother.

When Umbopa is eventually revealed as Ignosi, the long lost king of the legendary Kukuanas, the novel becomes engrossed with the battle the three white characters, donning the war-dress of African warriors, fight to free Kukuanaland from the tyranny of the usurper Twala, and to restore Ignosi's kingdom. This plot is one that has become almost a cliché of marvellous fantasy, so much so that Mendelsohn (2008:3) identifies it as structuring feature of the subgenre:

> Typically, the quest or portal fantasy begins with a sense of stability that is revealed to be the stability of a thinned land…and concludes with *restoration*…Most portal-quest fantasies associate the king with the well-being of the land, and the condition of the land with the morality of the place.

The connections between birth right, morality and cosmic decree have the 'European medieval' flavour of marvellous fantasy; the restoration of justice is synonymous with the restoration of the rightful ruler. What is significant, though, is that the centrality of Ignosi's quest and the manner of its narration combine to form the source of a debate about the position of black subjectivity in the novel. While Katz asserts that the adventures in Kukuanaland serve only as fantasies for European wish-fulfilment, Monsman (2006:97) argues that in

> Zululand, the imperialist had annihilated the natives' game and rendered his primitive weapons obsolete. But in Kukuanaland, Sir Henry's hand-to-hand combat implicitly restores the potency of the chieftain's weapons at the climactic moment and so suggests a different native-foreign power bAllance

> in Kukuanaland from that of the Boers and English in the land of the Basutos and Zulus.

The factor that fantasy criticism brings to bear on this debate is time and the appeal of antiquity. Fantasy, like romance, entices by enchanting us with its spaces, its realms, and an important source of desirability is the 'enchantment of distance, especially of distant time' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:13). What is foregrounded in fantasy criticism, sometimes missed in studies of *King Solomon's Mines* as romance, is the very important point Tolkien ([1964] 2001:31) makes that 'antiquity has an appeal in itself…'.

The appeal of antiquity figures strongly throughout *King Solomon's Mines* and does so closely in relation to another central concern of the novel, the depiction of an ideal masculine identity, embodied in the word 'gentleman'. In pondering how to begin his tale, Quatermain makes this odd digression:

> I, Allan Quatermain, of Durban, Natal, Gentleman make oath and say—
> That's how I Headed the deposition before the magistrate about poor Khiva and Ventvogel's sad deaths; but somehow it doesn't seem quite the right way to begin a book. And, besides, am I a gentleman? What is a gentleman? (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:4)

There is the suggestion here of the partly-lame, fifty-five year old, and admitted coward Quatermain questioning his own role as the protagonist of a romance adventure tale, a question which resonates strikingly with Stiebel's (2001:45) observation that Quatermain 'is not [the] typical romantic hero … associated…with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour and youth'. The reason for this is that the focus of Haggard's admiration, the ideal hero, is not Quatermain, but another protagonist, Sir Henry Curtis. It is Curtis whose quest to find his lost brother gives shape to the tale, and whose quiet strength and natural bravery are highlighted by Quatermain's narration. It is significant then that Curtis is always linked in descriptions to

two things, distant time and a masculine vitality that Haggard links specifically to Zulu warriors. On first sighting Curtis, Quartermain narrates:

> Among these passengers who came on board were two who excited my curiosity. One, a gentleman of about thirty, was perhaps the biggest-chested and longest-armed man I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a thick yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large grey eyes set deep in his head. I never saw a finer-looking man, and somehow he reminded me of an ancient Dane. Not that I know much of ancient Danes, though I knew a modern Dane who did me out of ten pounds; but I remember once seeing a picture of some of these gentry, who, I take it, were a kind of white Zulus.

The passage underlines the way Haggard links a lost and much desired heroic identity to an ancient past, which is in turn contrasted with an impoverished present. Katz (1987:59) argues that the 'late nineteenth-century emphasis on heroics grew out of both earlier cultural traditions and an antagonism to modern civilization.' The ancient Danes are contrasted with unscrupulous modern Danes, and there is an interesting echo of Quatermain's account of the 'Kafir who had done [him] a dirty turn' and the numerous degenerate Africans depicted in the novel who are contrasted with the antiquated, superior Kukuana.

Haggard tends to highlight what is disappointing, inefficient and ugly about modern imperial South Africa. Africans in particular are shown to be degraded by contact with white civilization, as in the episode very early on when Quatermain deters Africans from drinking spilled champagne by playing on their belief that the drink is bewitched, noting that those 'Kafirs went to the shore in a very great fright, and I do not think that they will touch champagne again' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]: 24). Quartermain is shown in various incidents manipulating African superstition to inspire fear of the worst excesses of modernity in scenes that prefigure a later, crucial episode. At the same time, these episodes position Quatermain as a paternal figure over the superstitious Africans in a model of the 'benevolent colonist'

Stiebel (2001:12) argues that Haggard 'wished to be'. The interconnections between magic, knowledge and superstition will be something I will draw attention to again further on.

Antiquity for Haggard is thus endowed with desirability in both the African and European. Monsman (2006:7-8) remarks that 'throughout this narrative a Bezerker/Zulu knighthood, epitomised by mail shirts and oxtails, imbues both European and African…Sir Henry, a sort of Nordic epitome of military masculinity…becomes in Haggard a white Zulu.' The point is underlined through the parallels made between Sir Henry and Umpbopa. Umbopa embodies an idealised form of the African masculinity that Haggard associated in particular with Zulu warriors, and it is several times indicated that he is the African double of Curtis. Quartermain narrates:

> …he was a magnificent-looking man; I never saw a finer native. Standing about six foot three high he was broad in proportion, and very shapely. Sir Henry walked up to him and looked into his proud, handsome face.
>
> 'They make a good pair, don't they?' said Good; 'one as big as the other.'
>
> 'I like your looks, Mr. Umbopa, and I will take you as my servant,' said Sir Henry in English.
> Umbopa evidently understood him, for he answered in Zulu, 'It is well'; and then added, with a glance at the white man's great stature and breadth, 'We are men, thou and I' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]: 33-34).

Despite the master-servant relationship established here, Umbopa curiously resists being reduced to an inferior. 'There was a certain assumption of dignity in the man's mode of speech, and especially in his use of the words "O white men," instead of "O Inkosis," or chiefs, which struck me,' notes Quatermain with an increasing sense of offense that Curtis does not seem to share (Haggard 2010 [1885]:32). 'How dost thou know that I am not the equal of the Inkosi whom I serve?' says Umbopa later, when Quatermain erupts in anger at the Umbopa's repeated assertions of equality with Curtis (Haggard 2010 [1885]:47). 'He is of a royal house, no doubt; one can see it in his size and by his mien; so, mayhap, am I. At least,

I am as great a man.' When Umbopa later tells Curtis, 'It seems to me that we are much alike, Incubu. Perhaps I seek a brother over the mountains,' he may be referring to the villainous Twala, the brother of his father who he must kill in order to claim his kingdom. However, there is also the suggestion that the brother Umbopa seeks is Curtis himself, the extent of whose likeness to Umbopa and whose commitment to Ignosi's cause is fully revealed in Kukuanaland.

However, spoken by the exiled Umbopa, the speech figures more convincingly as an expression of yearning for a place of belonging, a land of brothers, where Curtis does not belong. The distinction between brotherhood as a metaphor for doubling and its more common meaning of fellowship is a significant one. Brotherhood as a signification of fellowship suggests a vision for what Monsman argues is a 'possible rewriting of Zulu history from the point of view of what might have been and to make possible rebuttals to the British agenda for control'. But the former, brotherhood as a metaphor for doubling, does not, as this tends to underline Ignosi's role as a model for Curtis himself enacting a fantasy unsustainable outside the imaginary space of Kukuanaland.

As noted previously, Quatermain takes on the role of main interpreter of the tale and interpreter of the land the narrative frames. Occasionally, Curtis assists in this role but significantly Umbopa/Ignosi does not. While it is perhaps expected of a Victorian story that the framing of the story does not incorporate Ignosi, or any other black African character, within the club structure as an interpreter, what is significantly different from similar heroes of marvellous fantasy is that he is also not incorporated as a listener. There is no real-world analogue for Ignosi's identity outside the club framing of fantasyland where Victorian readers are represented by the audience of Quatermain's son; the idealisation Ignosi represents is

therefore sealed within fiction. The significance of this will become clearer as I trace Umbopa/Ignosi's arc.

Monsman also does not address the numerous indications in the novel that, like Sir Henry, Umbopa is also rendered in some sense a white Zulu. The idealised African masculinity embodied by Umbopa is from the moment of his entry into the novel linked to whiteness. Quatermain notes on seeing Umbopa for the first time that he is 'a tall, handsome-looking man, somewhere about thirty years of age, and very light-coloured for a Zulu' (Haggard, 2010 [1885:31). The connections between this vision of African beauty and whiteness are echoed later in the novel when Quatermain notes the women of Kukuanaland 'for a native race, are exceedingly handsome. They are tall and graceful, and their figures are wonderfully fine. The hair, though short, is rather curly than woolly, the features are frequently aquiline, and the lips are not unpleasantly thick, as is the case among most African races' (Haggard, 2010 [1885:92-93).

Quatermain's observations on Zulu customs, that Umbopa is 'a "Keshla" or ringed man; that is, he wore on his head the black ring, made of a species of gum polished with fat and worked up in the hair, which is usually assumed by Zulus on attaining a certain age or dignity' are part of his role as interpreter of the tale; they cement his authority and implicitly the one-sided nature of interpretation (Haggard, 2010 [1885:31). The description also has the effect of underlining Umbopa's dignity, hinting at his overall quality, while establishing him as linked to another superior version of the Zulu warrior, linked to whiteness.

The passage also employs a technique that appears throughout the novel, wrapping in time a sense of African greatness for which there is an expression of longing. Umbopa introduces

himself: 'My name is Umbopa. I am of the Zulu people, yet not of them. The house of my tribe is in the far North; it was left behind when the Zulus came down here a "thousand years ago," long before Chaka reigned in Zululand' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:33). Quatermain's opinion that Umbopa seemed 'different from the ordinary run of Zulus' underlines Umbopa's superiority to most Zulus, but also suggests a deterioration through time in his account of the Zulu migrations to the south of the continent. This is paralleled with a similar lineage reflected in Curtis, but there is also the suggestion that the British Empire has not unimaginable aspirations to greatness in the present, unlike the African greatness locked away from history. The story-arcs of both Curtis and Umbopa are essentially ones of revelation, that is, a gradual revelation of inherent greatness, not development. However, Umbopa's trajectory is from fantasyland to fantasyland, while Curtis's, like Bilbo's in *The Hobbit* (1937) is the journey 'there and back again'. What this indicates is that, unlike Umbopa, the idealisation embodied in Curtis is sustainable outside the frame that demarcates Kukuanaland as both unreal and lost to time.

Umbopa/Ignosi, like the fantasy landscape of which he is a mythic fixture, aids the European subject in his quest for the Recovery of a revitalised self. The whiteness that is a mark of his superiority is notably absent in the evil, tyrant-usurper Twala, who has taken Inosi's kingdom. Twala, unlike the beautiful light-skinned Ignosi, is a rendering of African physique couched in terms of the grotesque:

> …an enormous man with the most entirely repulsive countenance we had ever beheld. This man's lips were as thick as a Negro's, the nose was flat, he had but one gleaming black eye, for the other was represented by a hollow in the face, and his whole expression was cruel and sensual to a degree (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:101).

More significantly, Twala's analogue is a historical figure, situated outside the frame of Kukuanaland: 'Lobengula (a great and cruel scoundrel)'…the king of Inyati, a space that marks the last outpost of real-world geography in the novel (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:35). Umbopa serves in the role of an aide to the European subject in other ways. The crossing of the wilderness that takes place roughly in the middle of the novel is a necessary stage in the portal quest structure. Mendelsohn (2008:xix) asserts that 'portal fantasies lead us gradually to the point where the protagonist knows his or her world enough to change it and to enter into that world's destiny', but that often happens only after the hero has been challenged in the wilderness in his journey to the kingdom. 'The hero's departure from home to venture into the wilderness is the basic component of the hero tale…' (Hourihan, 1997:22). The wilderness is the space of trial, hard reflection, and brings the heroes closest to despair. It is often a desert that contrasts with the domestic safety of the frame space as well as the sublime lushness of the fantastic kingdom. Whereas in fantasyland, human evil must be confronted and overthrown, the desert effects a spiritual cleansing and hardens the body, proving the heroes fit for battle. At its most intense, Quatermain notes: There was no need to set a watch, for we had nothing to fear from anybody or anything in that vast untenanted plain. Our only enemies were heat, thirst, and flies, but far rather would I have faced any danger from man or beast than that awful trinity' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:55).

The change of space is signified in the change of mood and atmosphere that comes over Quatermain's narration, until Umbopa breaks into song:

> …we started off on foot upon our wild quest. I remember how we were all a little silent on the occasion of this departure, and I think that each of us was wondering if we should ever see our wagon again; for my part I never expected to do so. For a while we tramped on in silence, till Umbopa, who was marching in front, broke into a Zulu chant about how some brave men, tired of life and the tameness of things, started off into a vast wilderness to find new things or die, and how, lo and behold! when they had travelled far into the wilderness they found that it was not a wilderness at all, but a

> beautiful place full of young wives and fat cattle, of game to hunt and enemies to kill.
>
> Then we all laughed and took it for a good omen (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:36).

Umbopa's song is instrumental in maintaining the singular interpretation of the quest and landscape, and it is Quatermain who paraphrases, and thus implicitly, makes meaning of the tale he tells. The song enacts the purpose of the writing of an African romance, to revitalise masculinity with the spiritual benefits of adventure when the 'tameness of things' dulls reality and makes life trite. The African heroes of Umbopa's tale go out in search of 'new things', yet Haggard later qualifies this search for the new in saying the 'beautiful place' full of game to hunt and enemies to kill is 'not a wilderness'. Haggard thus mitigates the threat of the alien that is always present in the purely unfamiliar, reminding readers that the landscape is the site of adventure, of revitalised masculinity, familiar from tales if not from experience. Thus what the Zulu warriors in the song find is not a new world, but a revitalised version of an old, timeless Africa, sustaining its fertility in a literal sense (its paradisal lushness and abundant game) but also as a ceaseless font of adventure. The tale is also the microcosm of a fantasy adventure in Tolkien's sense, with a happy ending obtained through peril, regenerating energy and rekindling hope.

Umbopa's dignity and cheerfulness at this dreary stage of the adventure inspires affection in the other characters, but also provides a model of meaning-making navigation within the landscape into which they have entered. Africa always contains within it the threat of the alien which does not reward, does not revitalise, but obliterates. The narrative of nightmare is the necessary dark side to adventure. However, here, at the moment when the nightmare is closest to the surface, Umbopa's song, involving a temporary sojourn with danger and even

despair that culminates in a pay-off made all the more valuable because of its cost, recasts the landscape as the site of fantasy.

Quatermain then includes what seems like an out of the way thrill tale, 'a hunting yarn' but is actually an episode that ties up various structural and thematic threads. The most important theme developed is the reassertion or rediscovery of masculinity, a quality Haggard tends to emphasise can be possessed by any man regardless of race. Coming after Umbopa's song, it is also reminiscent of the 'beautiful Africa' the young warriors find, which is full of game to hunt: 'About a fortnight's march from Inyati we came across a peculiarly beautiful bit of well-watered woodland country' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:36). This is a place where the adventurers come across elephants, giraffes and eland, and are overcome with hunting-lust. Even Curtis, who 'had always been for pushing forward as fast as possible, more especially since we ascertained at Inyati that about two years ago an Englishman of the name of Neville had sold his wagon there, and gone on up country,' calls it a 'paradise of game' and votes for staying on (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:39).

The episode crucially develops Good's character, which serves mostly for comic relief:

> But perhaps the most curious-looking of the three, taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration, was Captain John Good, R.N. There he sat upon a leather bag, looking just as though he had come in from a comfortable day's shooting in a civilised country, absolutely clean, tidy, and well dressed. He wore a shooting suit of brown tweed, with a hat to match, and neat gaiters. As usual, he was beautifully shaved, his eye-glass and his false teeth appeared to be in perfect order, and altogether he looked the neatest man I ever had to do with in the wilderness. He even sported a collar, of which he had a supply, made of white gutta-percha (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:38).

The contrast between Good's fastidiousness and the wilderness is a running joke in the novel, but also serves to highlight the contrasts between civilization and wilderness, and suggests

that the wilderness requires adaptation to facilitate growth. The joke does nevertheless express a fondness for the trappings of British society; Good is not simply the subject of ridicule, as is evident in the following exchange:

> As usual, he was beautifully shaved, his eye-glass and his false teeth appeared to be in perfect order, and altogether he looked the neatest man I ever had to do with in the wilderness. He even sported a collar, of which he had a supply, made of white gutta-percha. 'You see, they weigh so little,' he said to me innocently, when I expressed my astonishment at the fact; 'and I always like to turn out like a gentleman.' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:38)

The echo of the loaded term 'gentleman', used in Quatermain's opening of the tale, suggests that Haggard is emphasising that the material trappings of British society are valid expressions of a masculine identity that has inherent value. Apart from foreshadowing the following events, Good's 'innocence' relates to a misdirected but not fundamentally wrong resolve to maintain civilisation in the heart of the wilderness, to be a gentleman, and this links again to a concern with the brand of masculinity that Haggard's romance upholds. It also links with an important assertion of racial superiority later in the tale. At first Good's dress proves inappropriate and even dangerous in the wilderness, resulting directly in the death of his faithful servant, Khiva, who dies saving Good from an elephant when Good trips over his inconvenient 'civilised dress'(Haggard, 2010 [1885]:43). Umbopa underlines the thematic significance of this episode: '"Ah, well," he said presently, "he is dead, but he died like a man!"' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:44). On the level of plot, however, Good's attention to dress proves essential to the survival of the protagonists later on.

The by-the-way hunting yarn also has the effect of developing its central thematic concern without loss of a white protagonist. No black South African character survives the journey into Kukuanaland. In terms of fantasy criticism, the clear analogue of the fantasy kingdom of Kukuanaland is historical South Africa. But unlike marvellous fantasy, the agents of change,

Quatermain and his friends, are foreign to both the frame space (South Africa) and fantasyland (Kukuanaland).

What follows is the next demarcation of space in the novel, as Quatermain brings Curtis back to the point at which he encountered the Portuguese explorer who gave Quatermain the map to King Solomon's Mines. Quartermain calls it 'the real starting-point of our expedition' and notes that the 'spot appears to be the outpost of the fertile country, and it would be difficult to say to what natural causes such an abrupt change in the character of the soil is due. But so it is' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:45-46).

The real starting-point of the expedition coincides with the beginning of the true wilderness, the end of the fertile country, where the hero's quality is tested. In terms of time, the effect is of a folded doubling, bringing Quatermain back to the beginning of a journey he previously did not take (having fallen ill). This is moreover a doubling underlined for us as Quatermain sees the landscape haunted by the image of 'poor Silvestre creeping back after his attempt to reach Solomon's Mines' twenty years before, an image in itself a doubling of the Portuguese ancestor with the same name who failed to make the journey centuries previously. These doubled images that fold time with striking peculiarity in certain spaces serve to cast the desert as the point of transition between history and timelessness, between the realist and mythopoeic.

From this point in the narrative's mapping, Haggard can enact desired meanings across his landscape with more imaginative freedom, while still restricted by the requirements of an internal aesthetic cohesiveness. Within the desert space, Haggard stresses timelessness, or what is rather a timeless archaism, reminiscent of the biblical. The desert is 'vast' and

'untenanted', plagued by insects that have existed from the beginning of time; Quatermain grumbles:

> He is an extraordinary insect is the house fly. Go where you will you find him, and so it must have been always. I have seen him enclosed in amber, which is, I was told, quite half a million years old, looking exactly like his descendant of to-day, and I have little doubt but that when the last man lies dying on the earth he will be buzzing round—if this event happens to occur in summer—watching for an opportunity to settle on his nose (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:55).

Mendelsohn (2008:xix) notes that, as the portal in quest fantasies is transitioned, the fantasy tends to 'become more mysterious, rather than less. The reliance on destiny in so many portal fantasies may reflect the need to create rational explanation for irrational action without destroying this mystery.' Tallying with Quatermain's assertion that he is a fatalist, there is the sense that Quatermain is destined to come here and make this journey, a sense of divine presence suggested in the image of the sun picking out the distant mountain and lighting up the path before it. The exchange that follows between Curtis and Umbopa underlines the purpose of the trials of the wilderness, and reinforces the kinship between the two characters:

> 'It is a far journey, Incubu,' he put in, and I translated his remark.
>
> 'Yes,' answered Sir Henry, 'it is far. But there is no journey upon this earth that a man may not make if he sets his heart to it. There is nothing, Umbopa, that he cannot do, there are no mountains he may not climb, there are no deserts he cannot cross, save a mountain and a desert of which you are spared the knowledge, if love leads him and he holds his life in his hands counting it as nothing, ready to keep it or lose it as Heaven above may order.'
>
> I translated.
>
> 'Great words, my father,' answered the Zulu—I always called him a Zulu, though he was not really one—'great swelling words fit to fill the mouth of a man…'
> 'What is life? Tell me, O white men, who are wise, who know the secrets of the world, and of the world of stars, and the world that lies above and around the stars; who flash your words from afar without a voice; tell me, white men, the secret of our life—whither it goes and whence it comes!

> You cannot answer me; you know not. Listen, I will answer. Out of the dark we came, into the dark we go. Like a storm-driven bird at night we fly out of the Nowhere; for a moment our wings are seen in the light of the fire, and, lo! we are gone again into the Nowhere. Life is nothing. Life is all. It is the Hand with which we hold off Death. It is the glow-worm that shines in the night-time and is black in the morning; it is the white breath of the oxen in winter; it is the little shadow that runs across the grass and loses itself at sunset' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:48-49).

In the passage above, there is an unresolved tension between fatalism and imposing one's will. The quiet confidence which marks Curtis here serves as indicator of the imperialist will to conquer the landscape, part and parcel of which is the willingness to freely risk one's life. It also describes one of the occasions of the master-servant relationship shifting suggestively between Umbopa and Curtis. Here we have a term of deference used, 'my Father', but also, in the act of associating superior knowledge with 'white men', Umbopa questions the validity of such knowledge where men test their quality, in the wilderness. Monsman (2006:8) argues that what Haggard's fantasies offer are extremes and intensities, 'the possibilities for triumph in the moment of loss, for joy and love, for dying the right sort of death'. Umbopa's speech suggests that white men, although knowing the 'secrets of the world', have lost the secret of living to the fullest, close to the edge of death, a secret Africa reveals. However, white knowledge will later become key to the success of the adventure.

The desert is then succeeded by the final trial of the landscape before the heroes penetrate into the kingdom of Kukuanaland: the seemingly insurmountable ring of mountains, where the heroes encounter a discovery that effects another folding in time: the discovery of the corpse of the Portuguese explorer whose descendant's map has led them there.

> There he sat, the dead man, whose directions, written some ten generations ago, had led us to this spot. Here in my own hand was the rude pen with which he had written them, and about his neck hung the crucifix that his dying lips had kissed. Gazing at him, my imagination could reconstruct the last scene of the drama, the traveller dying of cold and starvation, yet striving to convey to the world the great secret which he had discovered:—

> the awful loneliness of his death, of which the evidence sat before us. It even seemed to me that I could trace in his strongly-marked features a likeness to those of my poor friend Silvestre his descendant, who had died twenty years before in my arms, but perhaps that was fancy. At any rate, there he sat, a sad memento of the fate that so often overtakes those who would penetrate into the unknown; and there doubtless he will still sit, crowned with the dread majesty of death, for centuries yet unborn, to startle the eyes of wanderers like ourselves, if ever any such should come again to invade his loneliness. The thing overpowered us, already almost perished as we were with cold and hunger.

The cost of the encounter is clear, and there is an ominous horror in the image of a white explorer finally overpowered by the immensity he has traversed. Stiebel (2001:66) observes that the 'movement of the hero is always from the known and the British—whether "Home" or a British settlement on the coast—to the unknown African interior…The journey usually leads backwards in time…' The emphasis on doubling, on replication of incident across generations in a landscape that has not changed for centuries does much to demarcate Kukuanaland as outside the realm of history where timeless, mythic forces govern. This sense of timelessness is an important source of the wonder that infuses the landscape.

Kukuanaland is from the beginning rendered like a fantasyland version of, not just Africa, but curiously, South Africa in particular. The comparisons made by Quatermain, narrator and interpreter of the landscape, are quite specifically South African and recall observations made at the beginning of the novel in South Africa, specifically the previously quoted lushness of the Natal coast, the Zulu kraals, and the perfect nights Quatermain observes occur routinely in Southern Africa but which, in the novel, he experiences in Durban specifically. The significant difference between South Africa and Kukuanaland is signified in the 'white houses', the markers of European settlement on the Natal coast that remind Qautermain of the values of civilization (Haggard 2010 [1885]:24).

The balance the narrative strikes between similarity and wishful projection is a balance that is also key to the inspirational energies of marvellous fantasy. In order for the genre to function as more than escapist, it must suggest a use for its imaginative constructions, a use which most often manifests as a vision for the restoration of a known space. Tolkien ([1964] 2001:60-61) argues:

> In what the misusers of Escape are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic...Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using Escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing...the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter.

Similarly, Katz (1987:34) observes of the Romance, from which marvellous fantasy is descended, that with 'all its apparent distance from reality, romance does not distinguish itself as a separate, only more fanciful world, but seems always to be arguing for a place in the affairs of every day.' To Mendelsohn (2008:5), fantasy is 'less an argument with the universe than a sermon on the way things should be, a belief that the universe should yield to moral precepts…portal quest fantasies are structured around reward and the straight and narrow path.' However, the terms of the sermon presented are determined by what the narrative frames as the cause of thinning, or wrongness. Mendelsohn (2008:46) notes that the 'club narrative contains within it a melancholy of structure, a mourning, or at least nostalgia, for the past that makes it particularly useful for the expression of thinning…'

In *King Solomon's Mines*, Kukuanaland suggests the ideal of an unspoiled, heroic South Africa that has been lost, contaminated through foreign influence but also tarnished by time. Kukuanland is *like* South Africa, but far more beautiful, fertile, and varied, described by Quartermain as 'a vast expanse of rich, undulating veld or grass land, whereon we could just

make out countless herds of game or cattle' with vast groves 'of silver trees similar to those which are to be seen on the slopes of Table Mountain at Cape Town' (Haggard 2010 [1885]:78). It is populated by African warriors who are *like* Zulu warriors in their practices and appearance but finer, stronger, and more disciplined. That the Kukuana are also cut off from any foreign influence by the protective ring of perilous mountains, bordered by a desert, that surrounds them, suggests they have maintained their superiority through being frozen in time.

Kukuanaland is infused with the energy of the Romantic sublime, a positive sublime which ennobles through humbling, producing wonder. Stiebel (2001:12-13) observes that 'frequently Haggard, through Quartermain, confesses [muteness] before scenes both of wonder and horror'; this marks a series of the character's reactions after the entry into Kukuanaland. Sandner (2011:25) describes the Romantic sublime as that which 'threaten[s] excess at the level of the sign; the fantastic brings amazement through the realization of estrangement from language.' Quatermain states: 'I know not how to describe the glorious panorama which unfolded itself to our gaze. I have never seen anything like it before, nor shall, I suppose, again' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:75). There is no indication of the threatening 'indigenous sublime' identified by Shum (2008:22) as associated with the African landscape, a landscape Shum says 'threatens and abases the imagination', an infernal landscape that makes 'nature unnatural'. A complete inversion of Shum's descriptions accurately describes the effects produced in these passages.

The sublime here, firstly, is related to an understood, not alienating, order of the transcendent, located in the Christian religious. It is not infernal, it 'was Paradise'. All is in line with divine decree; 'over all was the glad sunlight and the breath of Nature's happy life' (Haggard,

2010 [1885]:76). Moreover, it is a reward that has been earned, 'a promised land'. Quatermain narrates: 'After filling ourselves, we lit our pipes and gave ourselves up to enjoyment that, compared with the hardships we had recently undergone, seemed almost heavenly' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:78). It does not abase the imagination, but ennobles it, bringing 'peace' and 'charm'.

In my previous chapter, I noted that Sandner (2011:26) located the pleasure of the sublime in the experience of the subject's 'special ability to participate in the transcendent', to relate to it in its very excess. There are imperialist undertones in this paradox, undertones which are foregrounded in Haggard's Romance. 'Nearly every one of his African romances has…a line in it attesting to Quartermain's muteness in the face of the unknown, but it is soon lost in the welter of naming and description that he *is* able to accomplish' notes Stiebel (2001:12-13). After detailing his feelings of humility and muteness before Kukuanaland, Quatermain goes on to say the 'landscape lay before us as a map', and proceeds to order, interpret and describe the landscape with all the imposition of power that mapping entails.

Mendelsohn (2008:8) argues:

> …one of the defining features of the portal-quest fantasy is that we ride with the point of view character who describes fantasyland and the adventure to the reader, as if we are both with her and yet external to the fantasy world. What she sees, we see, so that the world is unrolled to us in front of her eyes, and through her analysis of the scene. One result is that the world is flattened thereby into a travelogue, a series of descriptions made possible by the protagonists' unfamiliarity with it…Immediately, the world is new to both [protagonist] and us, even though it is new only in terms of what he is accustomed to.

In *King Solomon's Mines*, it is apparent that Quatermain's descriptions order experiences of the familiar, the exotic and the excessive in relation to the subjectivity constructed through himself, Good and Curtis, a narration that derives its meanings from the frame of communication between himself and the son 'at home' in England. According to Mendelsohn

(2008:8), any frame that results in such defamiliarization (as will result inevitably from an African Romance narrative pitched at Victorian readers), helps 'to justify the explanation of the world to the reader, and prepares us for the process of familiarization that takes place throughout the novel.' The familiarisation of a landscape, framed as unfamiliar, is what makes possible the imperialist ordering of mapping and description, 'creating a world through the layering of detail, and making that detail comprehensible. Given the need for comprehensibility, the only way to continually create the sense of wonder needed by the portal and quest fantasy is to embroider continually, to prevent the accretion of comfort.' (Mendelsohn, 2008:9). This leads to the next crucial stage in the portal fantasy 'where the protagonist knows his or her world enough to change it and to enter into that world's destiny' (Mendelsohn, 2008:xix).

When Umbopa eventually reveals his true identity as Ignosi, it is Curtis who distinguishes himself in the battle, and eventually beheads Twala, not Ignosi. Dressed in the war-dress of the Kukuana, Curtis nevertheless embodies the recovery of a masculinity that is his birth right, enabled by the African fantasy-space, not borrowed from it. On seeing Curtis dressed for battle in Kukuanaland, Quatermain remarks that 'he looked more like an ancient Dane than ever' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:100). After Curtis's heroic status in Kukuanaland is established in the act of defeating Twala in single combat, Quatermain begins referring to him for the first time as 'the Englishman' and then 'our great Englishman' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:171).

All three white protagonists are essential to the success of Ignosi's restoration. They are furthermore responsible for influencing Ignosi's just reign, exacting a promise from him that he will 'do away with the smelling out of wizards' and 'the killing of men without trial'

(Haggard, 2010 [1885]:127). Katz suggests this portion of the novel exemplifies the use of Africa in the imperial romance as primarily a space in which white masculinity, through the hero of the Romance, can be revitalised and showcased:

> When he is portrayed most dramatically, the hero is an agent of redemption, someone who comes, often from elsewhere, to restore a symbolically barren land; hence his regenerative nature…The coming of a stranger-hero to a plague-ridden or dead land be translated, in imperial terms, to the coming of the white man to the land of the black. In Haggard's fiction, the Englishmen who arrive in Africa usually find themselves in the midst of a crisis…They then enter the situation, tip the scale and win the day (Katz, 1987:71-72).

Moreover, Katz argues further that the restoration of Ignosi's kingship is only incidental to the true quest in the novel:

> The action proper concerns the treasure of the mines, and the treasure hunt almost immediately supersedes the original search. Once the Kukuanas appear and the dual source of evil is identified in Twala, the one-eyed king, and in Gagool, the witch, then duty, responsibility, and honour reappear in full dress as Quatermain and his friends return the rightful heir to the throne and rid the land of Twala and Gagool. As always, the Englishmen are good sports, react spontaneously in the face of adversity, combat evil, and restore order (Katz, 1987:43).

To Monsman (2006:84), the quest for wealth also assumes primacy for Quatermain and his friends. However, unlike Katz, Monsman argues that Haggard encodes this as marking their failure to acquire the true wealth of the African space, the 'power of rebirth, [of[renewal'.

> The Solomon-Sheba legend is Haggard's literary presentation of those primal interrelations of love, pain and death; and his trio of nineteenth-century adventurers themselves confront this mythic fertility pattern in the witch hunt, in the battle, and in their entrance into the place of death… Gagool's and Twala's cruelty has placed the land under a curse…until the king…restores fertility. Umbopa's birthright, proven by his secret snake tattoo, is confirmed by the transfer of the great uncut diamond from Twala's decapitated head to his, marking a national regeneration linked to the vegetation cycle…But unlike Ignosi, the adventurers are not mythically reborn from this shadowland (Monsman, 2006:95-96).

The factor neither Katz nor Monsman takes into account is the role that time plays in determining identity and in curtailing the significations of Kukuanaland.

After his kingdom is restored, Ignosi decrees:

> No other white man shall cross the mountains, even if any man live to come so far. I will see no traders with their guns and gin. My people shall fight with the spear, and drink water, like their forefathers before them. I will have no praying-men to put a fear of death into men's hearts, to stir them up against the law of the king, and make a path for the white folk who follow to run on. If a white man comes to my gates I will send him back; if a hundred come I will push them back; if armies come, I will make war on them with all my strength, and they shall not prevail against me (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:223).

This is a curiously negative account of imperial expansion for an imperial writer. Monsman (2006:97) argues that:

> Haggard's blueprint for a restored Kukuanaland repudiated the Victorian imperial stereotype of subjugated tribes, especially notions of wealth created by trade. Umbopa-Ignosi is the new Solomon, an African ruler whose principles of kingship are British—up to a point, they double Sir Theophilus Shepstone's Zulu reforms—but whose religion is mythic, and whose foreign policy is isolationist: Ignosi decrees a Kukuanaland uncontaminated by the socio-economic structures of the West…

However, it is important to note that as Ignosi's account has the Kukuanas frozen in time, into the future, it also suggests they have always been unchanging, into the *past*. This contrasts strikingly with the relationship set up between modern European identity and its relationship to the antiquated image of European identity established in the novel.

Further into the novel and beneath the sense of desire for contact with what is offered up by Haggard as an authentic, African vitality runs a deeper longing, centred on the legend of King Solomon's Mines. Early on in the novel, Quatermain recounts to Curtis what he has been told of the legendary mines in search of which Curtis's brother has gone missing:

> …he went on to tell me how he had found in the far interior a ruined city, which he believed to be the Ophir of the Bible…I was, I remember, listening open-eared to all these wonders, for I was young at the time, and this story of an ancient civilisation and of the treasures which those old Jewish or Phoenician adventurers used to extract from a country long since

> lapsed into the darkest barbarism took a great hold upon my imagination (Haggard, 1885:13-14).

Monsman's interpretation of the novel as primarily expressing a desire for contact with an idealised African vitality misses the indications in Quatermain's narration that curiosity about and admiration for these ancient Phoenician civilisations far outstrips the protagonists' interest in the paradisal Kukuanaland. From the beginning, it is King Solomon's Mines that are anticipated. Chapter Two is called 'The Legend of King's Solomon's Mines' and this is really the heart of the mystique that envelopes the novel and gives it its fantasy flavour. The narrative is structured in this section as if holding its breath before the legend is linked to the more pedestrian (and relatable) mystery of Curtis's brother's disappearance. Quatermain narrates: 'I heard this,' I answered, 'and I have never mentioned it to a soul till to-day. I heard that he was starting for Solomon's Mines.' The response is excitement that quite overwhelms any anxiety over the missing brother: 'Solomon's Mines!' ejaculated both my hearers at once. 'Where are they?' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:13). Kukuanaland is actually only mentioned incidentally, and when it is it rather unexpectedly detours the narrative's build-up of urgency regarding the quest to save Curtis's brother:

> …an old Isanusi or witch doctoress up in the Manica country told me all about [the mines]. She said that the people who lived across those mountains were a 'branch' of the Zulus, speaking a dialect of Zulu, but finer and bigger men even; that there lived among them great wizards, who had learnt their art from white men when 'all the world was dark,' and who had the secret of a wonderful mine of 'bright stones' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:14-15).

The works of the ancient civilisations which litter Kukuanaland, the great white road, the giant sculptures called by the Kukuana the 'The Silent Ones' and worshipped by them, and the mines themselves, are always described as works of ingenuity and wonder far outstripping that of which the Kukuana are capable. 'None can fashion such roads now, but the king suffers no grass to grow upon it', Quatermain is told by the Kukuana (Haggard, 2010

[1885]:87). The deep well of time into which these remains are sunk allows Haggard to further endow them with potent mystique, and it is significant that they are older than anything to be found in Kukuanaland, and a mystery to the Kukuanas themselves. 'My lord, the hands that made the road wrote the wonderful writings. We know not who wrote them,' Quatermain is told (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:87).

Stiebel (2001:29) notes that by

> …attributing the ruins and stone carvings in *King Solomon's Mines*…to the work of [what were considered] ancient white civilisations, probably of Phoenician origin, Haggard contributed to a powerful part of the myth about Africa in the nineteenth century. This myth was linked to race theories of the nineteenth century which held that African cultures were inevitably less sophisticated than European ones. The discovery of ancient stone-walled sites and gold mines in Africa posed a problem since these were unknown in comparable European Iron Age sites. Hence the theory that other, European, races must have built them in some far, distant age.

Unlike the Kukuanas, Quatermain and his friends are able to decode these artefacts and situate them within the historical narrative outlined above by Stiebel:

> Whilst I was gazing and wondering, suddenly it occurred to me—being familiar with the Old Testament—that Solomon went astray after strange gods, the names of three of whom I remembered—'Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon'—and I suggested to my companions that the figures before us might represent these false and exploded divinities.
>
> 'Hum,' said Sir Henry, who is a scholar, having taken a high degree in classics at college, 'there may be something in that; Ashtoreth of the Hebrews was the Astarte of the Phoenicians, who were the great traders of Solomon's time. Astarte, who afterwards became the Aphrodite of the Greeks, was represented with horns like the half-moon, and there on the brow of the female figure are distinct horns. Perhaps these Colossi were designed by some Phoenician official who managed the mines' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:188).

The implications of the encounter with this image of antiquated white subjectivity for European imperialism in the novel are significant. In the novel, Ignosi's enemy, the evil witch-finder Gagool, makes this prophecy:

> I am old! I am old! … Your fathers knew me, and their fathers knew me, and their fathers' fathers' fathers. I have seen the white man and know his desires. I am old, but the mountains are older than I. Who made the great road, tell me? Who wrote the pictures on the rocks, tell me? Who reared up the three Silent Ones yonder, that gaze across the pit, tell me? ...Ye know not, but I know. It was a white people who were before ye are, who shall be when ye are not, who shall eat you up and destroy you…
>
> And what came they for, the White Ones, the Terrible Ones, the skilled in magic and all learning, the strong, the unswerving?... (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:107).

Magic figures within a net of complex significations here. In order to escape from Twala's soldiers unscathed, Quatermain deceives the Kukuana into thinking the white men are 'magical' Lords from the Stars, a magic he links to their technology, their guns specifically, and the excessive strangeness of Good's appearance. Elsewhere the contrast between Good's fastidious attachment to his gentleman dress and the wilderness has been established as a running joke. Quatermain's magic-deceit, then, seems undermined by its rootedness in the extended joke of the deception shared with the reader, rendered almost farcical by the dependence on Good's ludicrous appearance. However, the *real* magic is in the uncanny 'knowing' of Gagool's prophesying.

While seeming to underline the deception, the prophecy acts to reveal an implicit truth in the mystique of white magic when Gagool explicitly links the technology/magic of the Ancient white race to the modern white characters, which the Kukuanas cannot match. Gagool's function is thus to see something in the white characters that they cannot see themselves, and to point this out for readers. To enable this function, Gagool appears to be the only thing in

the narrative that possibly has something truly magical about her: her age, which remains unexplained and mysterious.

From her introduction in the novel, Gagool is characterised by old age, but in such a way that she is no longer recognisably human. Her 'most extraordinary and weird countenance' is 'that of a woman of great age so shrunken that in size it seemed no larger than the face of a year-old child, although made up of a number of deep and yellow wrinkles' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:106). She is compared by turns to a monkey, a corpse and a snake. She overwhelms the English characters with a sublime horror, having, as Quartermain describes, a 'countenance so fearful indeed that it caused a shiver of fear to pass through us as we gazed on it' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:106). The Kukuana call Gagool 'the wise and terrible woman, who does not die', but this seems to be meant more as a poeticism than a fact, until the mystery of Gagool's age is finally investigated by Ignosi at the end of the novel, with somewhat inconclusive results. When an ancient Kukuana man is questioned, he confirms that in his youth, 'Gagool was even as she is now and as she was in the days of my great grandfather before me; old and dried, very ugly, and full of wickedness' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:221). Ignosi can conclude nothing but that 'this was a strange woman, and I rejoice that she is dead' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:222).

Gagool herself certainly capitalises on the mystery of her age, claiming to be the same Gagool that led the original Silvestre to his doom in the mines generations ago: 'Once before a woman showed the chamber to a white man, and behold! evil befell him,' and here her wicked eyes glinted. 'Her name was Gagool also. Perchance I was that woman' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:183). When confronted about the impossibility of this, Gagool suggests the alternative idea that she descends from a line of perpetually ancient women who are all

named Gagool, but the matter is left deliberately unclear and manifests as a source of great unease.

Gagool might be a strange figure to focus the only true appearance of the magical in the narrative, but the effect is that Gagool's prophecies and insight into the superiority of white magic/technology are endowed with supernatural authority. Gagool is also a link to the ancient white culture whose secrets the adventurers seek. Tasked with acting as the guide to Quatermain's group, Gagool alone of all the black characters knows the location of the mines and understands the 'white knowledge' that an eclipse is a natural phenomenon. In the white characters, such knowledge is natural. In Gagool, the knowledge is unnatural and it is suggested that she has obtained it through some dark art. Gagool's dark access to mysterious powers thus allows her to function in the narrative as something that will never be mistaken for a representative of natural black subjectivity: the voice of history itself.

Haggard seems to suggest parallels with contemporary European imperialism in Gagool's description of terrible white men who have the magic of access to 'all learning' and who are both more ancient than the Kukuanas and more lasting than they. Monsman (2006:94) notes that 'Gagool doesn't see the announced intentions of the adventurers as peacable. She foretells bloodshed because of imperial incursions. Repulsive, Gagool nevertheless correctly sees an imminent bloody cataclysm and warns of a new colonialism in pursuit of diamonds.' Despite the criticism implied in this, the effect is to underline the centrality of white subjectivity to the story of the South African space.

Stiebel (2001:22) writes that 'Haggard took as his mentor Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's experienced Secretary for Native Affairs, as he admired Shepstone's system of indirect rule

over Zulu chiefs and his tolerance of Zulu customs.' However, the speech Haggard gives to Ignosi detailing the evils of contact with Europeans in any form whatsoever combined with Gagool's warning of the overwhelming power of White Ones, who came before the Kukuana, and 'who shall be when [they] are not' suggests Haggard's doubts that his unspoiled fantasy of Africa will survive, even with the help of benevolent English rulers that support the preservation of African customs. Gagool's reasoning for this inevitable destruction, furthermore, that the White Ones are 'skilled in magic and all learning, the strong, the unswerving' renders the Kukuana hopelessly inferior to the white settlers in terms of their failure to evolve on their own terms.

Therefore, despite Haggard's belief in the benevolence of British indirect rule, the novel ultimately contrasts a fragile unchanging African past with a changing, self-transcending European subjectivity. In this sense, the cycle of white domination is also the cycle of history from which Haggard essentially seals off his fantasy of Kukuanaland through rendering it unchanging and impenetrable, suggesting it has no chance of surviving within the real world ascendancy of human progress. It embodies in fossil form, as Stiebel (2001:38, 58) describes it, that nostalgia for 'an Africa untamed and unknown yet ripe with promise' because in the pages of Haggard's novel it will remain untamed by European settlement and unknown by any save the three protagonists who will never return. In contrast, the dynamic nature of the white subject is depicted as possessing the unique ability to last, to evolve, and to transcend itself.

Prozorov's (2010:1273-1274) observations on temporal othering, by which 'the Other of today's Europe is found in its own past…from which it must delimit itself' and through which 'contemporary Europe defines itself as an open and non-exclusive "peace project" of

self-transcendence' is pertinent here. This is a point that needs to be remembered when reading through the descriptions in *King Solomon's Mines* of the heroes' encounter with the relics of the ancient white civilizations. These relics powerfully compel the interest of the characters throughout the novel, but while such encounters are marked by awe, the flavour of such awe is, increasingly, one of horror.

Although one might expect an imperial romance to exploit the encounter with white antiquity as a celebration of shared (and reflected grandeur), the encounter is much more complex. A celebration of grandeur there is, but the encounter also serves to impress on the protagonists an increasing sense of alienation from these forbears. This feeling of alienation, always accompanied by awe, increases as the protagonists descend into the mines, and culminates in the confrontation with an ancient sculpture signifying '*Death*', as Quatermain puts it (Haggard, 1885: 193-195). The sculpture is 'shaped in the form of a colossal human skeleton…which owes his origin to the same artist who designed the three Colossi', that is, the same ancient white civilization linked by Gagool to the protagonists. Quartermain notes with awe that the sculpture is 'admirably conceived and executed,' anatomically 'perfect down to the smallest bones' (Haggard, 1885: 193-195). Surrounding the skeleton are the human bodies of the departed Kukuana kings, transformed into stalactites.

The images of preservation signify the central point about African desirability in Haggard's novel. Like the Kukuana themselves, the Kukuana kings remain forever shielded from the ravages of time, but also cut off from it, images of life that are also images of death. The figure of Death itself, in contrast, is an image of a lost antiquated self from which a continuity of history has birthed living, dynamic descendants, in the forms of the three Englishmen. The protagonists' own feelings of alienation from that past serve to further underline their

participation in history as living, continually self-transcending subjects, a magic the story makes visible through the journey in time enabled by the African landscape. Essential to that magic is Kukuanaland itself, a vision of an unconquered, thrilling, paradisal Africa enchanted by time as a fiction that remains forever available, safe from history but also irrelevant to it.

King Solomon's Mines is fascinating as a Victorian novel that contains a clear precursor to the Secondary world construction of marvellous fantasy. Even more interesting is its depiction of a Secondary world inspired quite clearly by a specifically South African place. From Quatermain's astonished discovery of silver trees only previously seen at the Cape to his admiration at the prowess of Kukuana pseudo-Zulu warriors and the beauty of Kukuana women to the chastened awe described at the sight of the moon over Kukuanaland, which at once recalls Quatermain's early fond remark that perfect nights sometimes occur in Southern Africa, the love of South Africa as a place seeps movingly from the pages of the novel. In terms of Tolkien's definition of Recovery, whereby the ordinary is made wondrous through proximity to the magical, Kukuanaland certainly serves to enable a renewed appreciation and sense of wonder for South Africa as a place, the magic here manifesting as the imagining of Kukuanaland itself. In Kukuanaland, the reader is not in South Africa and yet is; in Haggard's novel the reader discovers South Africa stripped of appropriation and triteness, its luminescent majesty restored. This effect, as in the marvellous fantasy, is the culmination of the entire novel's craft evident in the movement of the characters through the landscape, the effect on descriptive language, the mystery of the Kukuana themselves, and the specific framing of spaces that enable contrast and recollection as needed. Unfortunately, these effects ultimately come at a great cost, the cost of othering.

The desirability of place in *King Solomon's Mines* is dependent on conflating the otherness of the past, the African, and the mythical in relation to European, historicised subjectivity, conflated with modernity. Furthermore, magic in *King Solomon's Mines* is ultimately embodied in the prophecy of European self-transcendence, articulated by the overseer of history, Gagool. This prophecy comes to embody a truth that is embedded within interpretations of the landscape as benchmarks of white evolution. Magic in *King Solomon's Mines* thus emerges as an underlying mythopoeic structure that articulates the inevitability, validity and centrality of European imperial triumph to the story of the South African space.

The representation of subjectivity in the novel can be analysed revealingly in terms of Mendelsohn's image of the club story discourse, in which representatives of the real, living world 'group around the narrator and listen to his (less commonly her) description of great events or political structures' (Mendelsohn, 2008:13). Although the novel depicts black heroes and villains, maidens and witches, and even a protagonist with a compelling story-arc, Ignosi, blackness, like the South African space, is a fixture in a tale intended for Victorian readers alone and African desirability is tailored and restricted accordingly.

Chapter Three

Zakes Mda: Magical Realism and the Challenge to the Marvellous

The setting for *The Heart of Redness* (2000), by Zakes Mda, slips back and forth between the immediate aftermath of South Africa's 1994 democratic elections and the mid-nineteenth century in a village called Qolorha in what is now the Eastern Cape. In its depictions of the nineteenth century, the novel shares with *King Solomon's Mines* a concern with a pre-colonial South Africa on the brink of its disappearance into the era of imperial history. Unlike Haggard's imperial romance, however, *The Heart of Redness* foregrounds (without making central) the imperial project as it was implemented and experienced by various inhabitants of the Eastern Cape.

During the nineteenth-century period of encroaching British expansion into Xhosa territory, a young Xhosa girl, Nongqawuse, prophesized that if the Xhosa slaughtered their cattle and ceased the sowing of crops, their ancestors would arise from the sea and defeat the invaders. An example of a historical account of the event appears in Ross's (1999:52-53) *A Concise History of South Africa*:

> The ancestors would return bringing with them herds of wonderful beasts, the newly dug grain pits would fill up, the whites would disappear into the sea and all would be well. After some hesitation and only after the king, Sarhili, had declared his adherence to the prophecies, perhaps 90 per cent of the amaXhosa slaughtered their cattle, destroyed their grain, or consumed it as beer, and on the morning of 17 February 1857, waited for the ancestors and the cattle to return…They were disappointed. Nongqawuse is now seen as having inaugurated, not the renewal, but the mass suicide of the amaXhosa.

The primary setting of the *The Heart of Redness* is Qolorha, the site of Nongqawuse's prophecies. The novel recounts this historical event from the conflicting perspectives of two factions within the Xhosa. One group, the Unbelievers, refused to slaughter their cattle and

blame the defeat of the Xhosa on Nongqawuse's prophecies. The other group, the Believers, blame the Unbelievers for failing to slaughter their cattle and the resultant failure of the prophecies to be fulfilled. Within the historical timeline, *The Heart of Redness* personalises the conflict between Believers and Unbelievers through its portrayal of the twins, Twin and Twin-Twin. The twins, who take on opposite sides of the issue of belief in Nongqawuse, are echoed within the contemporary narrative in their descendants Bhonco and Zim. The twins begin arguing over small aspects of the traditional belief system, but become polarised irreconcilably on the issue of the cattle-killing. Juxtaposing the present with the nineteenth-century setting, the novel shows how conflicts between Bhonco and Zim within the post-1994 setting of Qolorha continue to be shaped by rivalries between these two factions that coalesce increasingly around notions of progress vs tradition.

It is primarily through the perspective of the character Camagu that the novel explores the implications of Nongqawuse's legacy for a post-democratic South Africa. Camagu, a Xhosa intellectual who has spent the majority of his life in exile, is deeply affected by the singing of a Qolorha woman, NomaRussia, at a Hillbrow wake, and follows her to the homeland of Nongqawuse. However, upon arrival in Qolorha, Camagu's search for NomaRussia comes to nothing and he is instead drawn into the conflict between the Believers and Unbelievers. Significantly, the novel's exploration of the significations of Nongqawuse's legacy in relation to African identity takes place within the framework of tourism, an industry that trades, like marvellous fantasy, on the desirability of place. The Unbelievers support a casino and water park development in Qolorha that will overwrite the legacy of the cattle-killing with a tourist vision that embodies progress. The Believers, who wish Nongqawuse's legacy to be honoured and tend to favour the conservation of traditional structures in various forms rather than progress, oppose the development.

In its depictions of the imaginary Kukuanaland, Haggard's novel expresses nostalgia for a vanishing Africa as an 'unspoiled place where the European male could make a fresh start' (Stiebel, 2001:19). In contrast, although *The Heart of Redness* expresses a sense of loss in its lament over the tragedy of the cattle-killing and subsequent triumph of colonialism, the novel does not project nostalgia for a lost ideal. The stakes in the novel instead centre on the fate of Qolorha-by-Sea, which is situated firmly within the context of post-democratic South Africa. The importance of the setting, and the debate over significations of the events that happened there, tie in to a deeper concern with the meanings of Xhosa identity within a post-apartheid context. In this portrayal and centralising of black African subjectivity, more than any other aspect of the novel, *The Heart of Redness* differs from Haggard's romance.

In *King Solomon's Mines*, Kukuanaland is an imagined African fantasyland structured fundamentally on the requirements of Victorian desires whilst the historical location and political status of its framing South African spaces are only implied. The fictional status of Kukuanaland is necessitated by its conflict with imperial progress; thus, its fossilised happy ending is sealed away from history. In contrast, there is no purely fictional space in the pages of *The Heart of Redness*; the settings depicted are located overtly within South African historical and geographical realities. Situated in history, Qolorha, unlike Kukuanaland, has a reality and more importantly, a future. Yet Qolorha is also a space lush with myth and magic, and *The Heart of Redness* utilizes structural patterns of movement, perspective, and time-slippage intriguingly similar to characteristics of the marvellous paradigm. The effect of these structural elements on the desirability of place is the subject of this chapter.

The rejection of a fantasy world figuration is not significant in itself; fantasy worlds, in secondary world forms, are unique to the marvellous fantasy sub-genre. However, in *The*

Heart of Redness specifically, the absence of the fantasy world is linked directly to the text's refusal to register magic as other. While the status of some supernatural occurrences in the novel is debated, many are simply portrayed as aspects of the novel's realism. Gaylard (2005:45) argues that the depiction of the magical within the real world, as opposed to its portrayal within a space meant to be recognised as entirely fictional, is a key feature of the postcolonial appropriation of the fantastic in the depiction of space:

> The difference between classic fantasies like Tolkien's, which are works of the marvellous, and postcolonialism, is that the latter does not ask us to enter another world; rather it shows us how another realm interpenetrates our own world. The magic in postcolonialism may be explicable in scientific terms, may derive from arcane knowledge, may be a spell; but often it is simply an aspect of the world described. In other words, the magic in postcolonialism is real.

The quote above appears in Gaylard's study of African works in the genre of magical realism, and serves mainly to differentiate such works from the marvellous. Gaylard's telling term for works of the marvellous is 'classic fantasies' suggesting the dominant association of fantasy with the marvellous paradigm, and the consequent marginalisation of magical realism as other, novel and subversive. It should, however, be noted that Gaylard's main purpose in defining magical realism, specifically in relation to the marvellous, is differentiation. How does magical realism, something new and unknown, differ from fantasy, which is known and established and understood? The same focus on differentiation in the service of defining the unknown magical realist mode appears in Barker's (2008:3) discussion of the term magical realism in specific relation to Mda's *The Heart of Redness*:

> Taking for example Mda's *Heart of Redness*, we might question the applicability of the term magical realism, yet we immediately recognize the unsuitability of other terms describing the mixing of elements of realism and fantasy. Whatever else the novel is, it is not science fiction, fantasy, fable or fairy tale.

In my previous chapter, I analysed the depiction of a South African space in *King Solomon's Mines*, a narrative that incorporates a clear precursor to a marvellous paradigm. While this

narrative depicts a desirable South African space in a positive, energising way, rooted in the exhilaration afforded by the sublime, my analysis shows that such a work is dependent on various layers of othering in the service of Victorian subjectivity. In this chapter, I will argue that magical realism is not only different in its appropriation of the fantastic in relation to its depiction of place, but that it engages directly and combatively with the paradigm of the marvellous. *The Heart of Redness*, I argue further, is an example of a magical realist text that achieves the desirability of place rooted in wonder and enchantment whilst effectively foregrounding questions of othering. In this chapter I aim to show that the novel is capable of enabling Recovery like a marvellous fantasy whilst simultaneously casting the otherness of the past, magic, and African-ness into debate.

An array of characteristics has been identified in magical realism, most of which can be seen in other subgenres of the fantastic as well as in realism. Like any genre, magical realism is an inexact designation, its outer spaces overlapping with other forms of literary and non-literary art. The essential characteristic of magical realism regards the status of what in other fantastic sub-genres is termed the fantastic, but which in magical realism is portrayed as an aspect of realism itself. This awkward formulation is an attempt to avoid the pitfalls in defining the term that arise, for example, in definitions by Maggie Bowers (2004).

Bowers (2004:1) defines magical realism as a narrative mode that offers ‘a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy’. Aside from lacking clarity as to what ‘Western philosophy’ entails, the definition assumes a singular, atemporal understanding of Western modes of thinking, and by extension, a ‘Western’ identity. It is unclear, for example, as to whether ‘Western philosophy’ assumes the status of a religious, Christian experience of the divine within a medieval or contemporary religious outlook to be

'fantastic' or 'realist'. As Gaylard (2005:41) points out, the 'Western epistemology includes the intuitive and the extra-rational, and the non-Western is by no means automatically premodern, animist or superstitious'. Although the definition is a useful starting point, further problems arise from Bowers's subsequent discussion of magical realism in relation to the fantastic:

> When critics discuss magical realist novels...in terms of the fantastic, their approach to these texts provides them with very different interpretations to those by magical realist critics...[Fantastic literature criticism] assumes that [magical events] are presented by the narrators to be extraordinary events within a realist tale. A magical realist interpretation considers these [magical] elements to be presented by the narrator to the reader as ordinary events in a realist story (Bowers, 2004:25).

The above explanation is useful because it highlights the error of reception in conflating magical realism with the fantastic, but also flattens the numerous, crucial variances in the depiction of the magical within different forms of the fantastic. It also conflates the 'ordinary' with the 'realist' whereas realist literature is full of extraordinary events. Conversely magical realism, whilst depicting the magical as realist, does not always assume such events to be ordinary. Gaylard (2005:44) asserts that the magic in magical realism 'is also wonder or enchantment, an alternative formulation of the idea of defamiliarisation or estrangement…' If magical events in magical realism were always depicted as ordinary, the genre would be incompatible with wonder or estrangement since, by definition, the ordinary does not provoke such responses.

Barker's classification of *The Heart of Redness* as a magical realist text, quoted above, rests on his acceptance of Christopher Warnes's definition of the genre: 'The key defining quality of magical realism is that it *represents both fantastic and real without allowing either greater claim to truth*' (emphasis in Barker, 2008:4). Warnes's discussion of the term is worth considering more extensively, as he makes several observations of the genre that are pertinent

to this study. Before doing so, however, I will point out that Warnes's definition, as does my own to some extent, falls into the same paradox of differentiating the fantastic from the real in order to explain the status of the fantastic in magical realism as an aspect of the real. It is a definition that erroneously assumes a prior, established understanding of what the fantastic is within a mono-cultural community with a singular, enduring and identifiable worldview. What is interesting about the problems that arise from these definitions, and what I propose in this chapter, is that the conundrum does not arise from attempting to define magical realism. It arises rather from the fact that the body of work called magical realism challenges all other formulations of realism and the fantastic. It is a genre that demands a reformulation of our understanding of other genres and the dominant culture from which they derive the assumptions and certainties that give them their labels. Implicitly, it is a genre that foregrounds questions about the suitability of marvellous fantasy for a South African, and by extension any diverse, readership.

The Heart of Redness is a narrative that foregrounds the need for reformulation; the debate over the meanings of real and non-real, modernity and tradition, and African-ness makes up the substance of the novel's central plot. The narrator of the novel tells us that when the Xhosa villagers of the novel 'talk of the redness of unenlightenment they are referring to the red ochre', the red ochre, we are told that 'that women smear on their bodies and with which they also dye their isikhakha skirts' (Mda, 2000:79). In the novel, the redness of the ochre serves as a synecdoche for Xhosa tradition, a notion that is in itself a subject of debate within the story. In the novel's framing of Xhosa Qolorha with the diverse Hillbrow, Mda broadens the significations of redness to implicitly incorporate discussions of South African-ness and African-ness or African identity.

The novel's title recalls Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), referencing the colonial link between the darkness of so-called barbarism and African-ness. In her discussion of Haggard's imperial romances, Stiebel (2001:64) suggests that Haggard sustains a fine balance between the African wilderness as Edenic, unspoilt nature and as 'the alienated heart of darkness', a 'pessimistic image of Africa' that, by the late nineteenth century 'was forming in the public imagination' (Stiebel, 2001:19). By substituting redness for darkness, Mda's text rephrases Conrad's linking of the African with the absence of civilisation as a subject in debate, interrogating questions of African-ness, barbarism, civilisation, Westernisation and enlightenment on a number of levels. Because the construction of Western subjectivity is the centre on which the imperial romance model is balanced, Mda's de-centering of that project results in a toppling of its Eurocentric structure. This has significant implications for how the desirability of place is affected.

The marvellous fantasy paradigm, as I have argued previously, is dependent on various assumed certainties. The most significant of these certainties concerns the status of the fantastic as entirely imaginative; this is best articulated in Tolkien's [1964] 2001:55) assurance that 'creative fantasy is founded upon the hard recognition that things are so in the world as it appears under the sun; on a recognition of fact…' Creative fantasy is what Sandner (2011:15) refers to as modern fantasy, wherein the magical is associated with a body of superstitious belief exploded by the advent of modernity. In the marvellous, the magical or superstitious is thus an exercise in the modern imaginative even as it evokes antiquity in its recollection of a magical worldview assumed to be safely laid to rest by modernity. The pleasure of enchantment, then, at least in the sense that Tolkien uses it, is based on this assumed understanding of the fantastic as entirely imaginative and hence posing no threat to

the modern identity. It is this way evocative of antiquity, a source of pleasure in itself as it too is assumed to be buried safely away.

Magical realism, because it situates the supernatural within the realist, clearly explodes any notion of a consensus or assumption about the way 'things are' or about how such things appear 'under the sun'. In magical realism, the supernatural figures not as a modern imagining of antiquated superstition, but as a belief system fully operative in and relevant to a modern context. Warnes (2009b:74-75) further differentiates between two orientations within magical realism, faith and irreverence:

> My argument is that writers' deployment of magical realist strategies of narration often corresponds either to the desire to valorise a worldview in which there is no clear distinction between natural and supernatural, or to a quite different drive towards parody, self-conscious critique and epistemological scepticism (Warnes, 2009b:75).

According to Warnes, faith based magical realism requires 'the reader to suspend rational-empirical judgements about the way things are in favour of an expanded order of reality' and that this is done frequently to 'recuperate a non-western cultural world view' (Warnes, 2009a:11-12). Irreverent magical realism differs in focus in that it rather 'seeks to critique the claims to truth and coherence of the modern, western world view by showing them up as culturally and historically contingent' (Warnes, 2009a:12-13). In his own analysis of *The Heart of Redness*, Warnes concludes that the novel is more in the mould of irreverent magical realism because he finds magical realism to function in the novel as a way to assist Mda in 'generating a general mockery, a ludic critique, which leads to the deflation of established truth or seriousness and leads us back to the principal theme of all his works: reconciliation' (Warnes, 2009b:88-89). I will be considering some of the claims that lead Warnes to this classification, but my primary interest is in the effects of a magical realist paradigm on the desirability of place. Both faith-based and irreverent magical realism deconstruct the

certainties on which marvellous fantasy is based, certainties which render the fantastic non-threatening and thus capable of enchantment. Thus both have implications for the portrayal of place.

As argued previously, the desirability of place in marvellous fantasy is effected through narrative shape as well as content. This gives rise to the portal quest structure which emphasises discovery and necessitates elaborate, lush description (Mendlesohn, 2008:xix). According to Mendlesohn (2008:9), this is because the only way to 'continually create the sense of wonder needed by the portal and quest fantasy is to embroider continually…' This structure also results in the tendency to orientalise 'fantasyland', reducing it ultimately to a mechanism for the hero. These structures often require a hero/outsider to confront the wronged state of the land and enter into its destiny in order to set all to rights. Ultimately fantasyland is an elaborate mechanism in the construction of subjectivity, enabling the heroes and their real-world analogues to discover something about themselves or to renew their appreciation for their world through Recovery.

In my analysis of *King Solomon's Mines*, I argued that in the case of the imperial romance, this structure easily translates into an orientalising of imperial territories to effect some service for imperial subjectivity. The marvellous fantasy, as it later developed, turned to a focus on othering its own past. In the marvellous paradigm proper, magical re-imaginings of the medieval European past have the inherent potential to function as spaces of desirability to enable Recovery in relation to home-spaces. Cultural and racial otherness can certainly appear in these works, but the difference from romances like Haggard's is that marvellous texts can diffuse the fascination with the non-European that is exploited and developed by imperial romances that are all about the appeal of places other than home. Quite contrary to

Haggard's depiction of the other (in his case the African) as invigorating for European spirituality and masculinity, the notion of the appeal of otherness as dangerous and threatening was developing powerfully in Romantic writing. Leask, (1992:7) writes that the 'fear of contagion…can be regarded, along with a mounting fear of cultural and racial degeneration, as one of the permanent anxieties of empire…' Marvellous texts can depict the European past in many ways, but one way they can redirect desirability away from the other and back onto the self is by emphasising the European past as a more desirable locus of otherness on both aesthetic and moral grounds. Recovery in this way becomes a mechanism for rekindling the desirability of the European present through the rendering of an exotic European past.

Considered in light of the marvellous paradigm, desirability of place in *The Heart of Redness* makes telling departures whilst utilizing intriguingly similar elements. Mendlesohn (2008:xix) makes the point that when

> we think of portal fantasies, we commonly assume that the portal is from 'our world' to the fantastic, but the portal fantasy is about entry, transition, and negotiation…Characteristically in quest fantasy the protagonist goes from a mundane life—in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist)—into direct contact with the fantastic; through which she transitions, to the point of negotiation with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm.

In *The Heart of Redness*, the protagonist Camagu follows exactly this pattern in his journey through the novel. Camagu is an outsider-protagonist that enters, transitions and shapes the destiny of a place that, though not a fantastical or even imaginary kingdom, is 'a place rich in wonders' (Mda, 2000:06). The wonders are a source of great debate in the novel, but their allure is no less potent or mysterious because of it. Regardless of the status of the fantastic, the effects are the same as in the marvellous; they beckon and enchant.

Warnes (2009b:84-85) comments that in *The Heart of Redness*, 'as in Mda's other novels, the aesthetic is meant to activate healing through enchantment' but in this novel specifically 'it is the landscape that supplies the material basis for Mda's aesthetics'. This recalls Tolkien's insistence that enchantment depends, ultimately, on the depiction of place, not magic. 'Fantasy, the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds, [is] the heart of the desire of Faerie' (Tolkien [1964] 2001:41). Warnes further argues that the 'aestheticized landscape' in *The Heart of Redness* 'is eroticised by linking it to the character of Qukezwa…' Qolorha-by-Sea is actually eroticised in its connection to two female characters, beginning with the enigmatic NomaRussia, whose unearthly singing draws Camagu, siren-like, to Qolorha against his better judgement. On arrival in Qolorha, Camagu's search for NomaRussia is frustrated and he is increasingly drawn to Qukezwa who also captivates him through singing. Significantly, Qukezwa's singing is Mda's means of feminizing and eroticising the landscape:

> Many voices come from her mouth. Deep sounds that echo like the night. Sounds that have the heaviness of a steamy summer night. Flaming sounds that crackle like a veld fire. Light sounds that float like flakes of snow on top of the Amathole Mountains. Hollow sounds like laughing mountains (Mda, 2000:175).

The embodiment of landscape as female is strikingly similar to the sexualisation of landscape Stiebel (2001:41) notes is intrinsic to the imperialist romance, wherein the feminised landscape invites conquest by the male explorer. However, as I will show, the relationship with landscape Mda conveys through Camagu's relationships with these female characters is somewhat different. Warnes (2009b:85) believes '*The Heart of Redness* is less concerned with reconciling Believers and Unbelievers than it is with reconciling Camagu with his roots,' and it is this relationship to heritage and tradition that informs Camagu's relationships with different women in Qolorha, and by extension the place itself.

Camagu's first encounter with Qolorha through NomaRussia's singing is described as follows:

> Her voice remains hauntingly fresh. It is a freshness that cries to be echoed by the green hills, towering cliffs and deep gullies of a folktale dreamland, instead of being wasted on a dead man in a tattered tent on top of a twenty-storey building in Hillbrow, Johannesburg (Mda, 2000:27).

The description of NomaRussia's singing highlights Qolorha as a 'folktale dreamland', a place of lush beauty in stark contrast with city Johannesburg. The contrast is highly emphasised in these passages. NomaRussia is 'an incongruous mirage'; her 'beauty is not in harmony with this wake' because her voice 'does not speak of death. It shouts only of life.' Camagu attends the wake only because he is drawn by NomaRussia's voice, but the death is itself an image of Camagu's disenchantment, a neat opposite to the revitalising, enchanting effect of the novel's 'fantasy' space, Qolorha.

We learn later that the unknown man whose wake Camagu attends is Twin, the brother of Qukezwa who Camagu later marries. Twin himself is named after Twin's ancestor, Twin, whose wife Qukezwa is the modern-day Qukezwa's ancestress and double. In his union with Qukezwa, Camagu himself becomes the double of Twin. Camagu's journey is also the reverse of the contemporary Twin, who has departed Qolorha to seek wealth in the city. The funeral Camagu attends at the beginning of his journey therefore echoes the death that is so strongly associated with the disenchantment that permeates the Hillbrow scenes, and lays the ground for his resurrection as the new Twin.

Doubling, as in *King Solomon's Mines*, plays an important role in *The Heart of Redness*. Warnes (2009b:85) remarks that 'the dangers of reliving the past are…signified in the repetition of names in the novel' but also notes techniques Mda uses, such as his

contextualisation of proverbs, that 'gesture tentatively towards the various states of flux in which his characters find themselves':

> Proverbs…are prefixed or suffixed by phrases such as 'in our language there is a proverb'; 'our elders say' and 'they say'. Framed in this way, these proverbs are distanced from the immediate level of the narration. They do not so much index traditional African values as observe the passing of their relevance (Warnes, 2009b:80).

The repetition of names in the novel, as signifiers of doubling, can be read in the same context. In Haggard's romance, doubling works to inscribe Kukuanaland as the site of timeless, mythic forces that become the frame for destiny. In Mda's novel, doubling emphasises flux and rebirth through change that is specifically related to evolving the meanings of tradition. Within the opening scenes of the novel, Camagu's attendance of the funeral of a man he doubles is at the onset of his journey towards spiritual resurrection. As such it also signifies a cycle of evolving, dynamic Xhosa history marked positively in the contemporary narrative by highs of resurrection, inspiration and hope. Although Haggard embodies themes of rebirth in the redemption of Kukuanaland through Ignosi's return as king, Haggard also marks black African participation in this cycle as completely mythopoeic, sealed away from time, and very much severed from the frame space of historical South Africa.

Hillbrow functions as a frame space in *The Heart of Redness*; it is the space outside the portal to fantasyland and its effect is to emphasise the desirability of Qolorha. Mendelsohn (2008:21-28) emphasises the contrasting function of the frame space in portal-fantasies: 'The otherworld of the portal fantasy relies on the contrast with the frame world, on the world from which we begin the adventure… [The] fantastic can be intensified if contrasted with the most mundane Real possible'. Hillbrow embodies a dreary view of post-democratic South

Africa and the alienation Camagu feels originates in the setting. After being in exile for almost thirty years, Camagu returns to South Africa to find the country a site of exploitation for the corrupt 'aristocrats of revolution', where his skills and integrity have no value.

> He had tried to explain about his skills in the area of development communication, how he had worked for international agencies, how as an international expert he had done consulting work for UNESCO in Paris and for the Food and Agricultural Organisation in Rome, and how the International Telecommunications Union had often sought his advice on matters of international broadcasting. The interviewers were impressed. The commended his achievements. He had done his oppressed people proud in foreign lands. And now, the freedom dance? Alas! His steps faltered (Mda, 2000:31-32).

Twin, the 'simple, upright citizen' who has died is mourned only by 'grandmothers and grandfathers. The dilapidated orphans of the night.' (Mda, 2000:28). Camagu experiences Giggles, the nightclub which functions as a kind of commentary on the dark side of democratic South Africa's triumph, as a place from which he needs to get away. Giggles is patronised by the 'disaffected exiles and sundry learned rejects of this new society. He is one of them too, and constantly marvels at the irony of being called an exile in his own country' (Mda, 2000:25).

Camagu's experiences have alienated him from his idealism and from South Africa itself. We are told that he 'was gradually losing his enthusiasm for this new democratic society' (Mda, 2000:32). As a consequence, Camagu lacks purpose tied to a sense of identity, both of which have been eroded through the loss of a sense of belonging. The word used throughout the novel to embody this lack is 'dream' and Qolorha is a folktale 'dreamland'. We are told that 'Camagu used to see himself as a peddler of dreams. That was when he could make things happen. Now he has lost his touch. He needs a peddler of dreams himself, with a bagful of dreams waiting to be dreamt. A whole storage full of dreams' (Mda, 2000:39).

The alienating frame-space of Hillbrow necessitates the quest structure as Camagu travels to Qolorha to seek NomaRussia. Mendelsohn's (2008:4) observation that the object of the quest in the portal-quest structure is merely a metaphor for the real reward, usually 'moral growth and/or admission into the kingdom, or redemption' is made explicit in Camagu's thought that NomaRussia is 'like a spirit that can comfort him and heal his pain' (Mda, 2000:30). NomaRussia embodies the healing effects of Qolorha, the enchantment of which gives Camagu his 'dream', reigniting his commitment to national healing.

It is through 'dreams' used in this sense that Recovery takes on a uniquely postcolonial meaning and significance. For Tolkien ([1964] 2001:58), writing within a post-World War II British context, Recovery is a weapon against appropriation and the loss of wonder that results from over-familiarity. Recovery, he believed, can restore the sheen of newness to the ordinary, and ultimately enable the recovery of a sense of humility before the marvels of wholesome, familiar things. The turn from the exotic spaces of empire in the imperial romance to the European past in marvellous texts as a more desirable source of otherness further suggests a need to rediscover the wonder of home spaces. In a postcolonial context, the stakes are considerably higher.

Gaylard (2005:40) notes that there is a 'contention that current African writers wish to participate in the project of national healing' and that this is 'largely true due to their sense of outrage at Africa's embattled placement within the world system'. However, he goes on to point out that 'whilst some nationalist impulse is demonstrable in all African writers, to emphasise it is to ignore the various alienations of writers…from the nationalist project'. In Mda's novel, the various alienations mentioned by Gaylard are detectible in Camagu's post-apartheid disillusionment. Appropriation in this context translates to disenchantment with the

urgent project of national healing, and the result is the need to flee a place that Camagu experiences as the opposite of desirable, as a sap on constructive energy. The importance of Recovery in this context is that desirability of place is directly linked to invigorating commitment to national healing.

Recovery within the marvellous draws on the magical rooted in archaic tradition. In contrast, as Gaylard points out, the assumption that magical realism valorises tradition/magic is erroneous. This results in the mistaken association of magical realism:

> with a certain atavism or with particular cultural traditions, and this is not borne out by the practice of magical realists who draw on traditions at will for their own purposes, but who tend to be sceptical of collective myths, especially when such myths are used in the creation of national identities, or are otherwise soaked with power' (Gaylard, 2005:41).

In between the alienation effected by disillusionment and the naivety of idealism, the challenge becomes to utilize Recovery to reinvigorate the desire to remain committed to national healing whilst maintaining a degree of self-reflexivity in relation to the dynamics of identity and nation. In other words, how is it possible to sustain desirability whilst constantly questioning the status, seriousness and even ethics of the basis on which desirability turns?

Of central concern to the project of national healing is, as Warnes (2009b:83) observes of Mda's other novels (he excludes *The Heart of Redness*) 'restoring, on a human level, an affectivity and a dignity denied for generations by the impositions of colonialism and apartheid'. But this applies to *The Heart of Redness* as well, and is an objective in the novel that further complicates the operations of Recovery and self-reflexivity. Warnes (2009b:80-81) comments that 'irony is pervasive' in the novel and, as 'Mda's position on matters of custom oscillates between respect, distrust and outright satire…so it is with his magical realism.' The dignity that the novel restores is in the way it always returns to the relationship

the characters have with Qolorha itself, and in Mda's depiction of place in line with the aesthetic of the sublime.

Warnes (2009b:84-85) comments that in *The Heart of Redness*, the wonders of Qolorha-by-Sea, are 'poised ambivalently between several senses: spectacular natural beauty, marvels that border on the supernatural, or dramatic historical occurrences. All three senses are present in the novel.' Wonder in these three senses is characteristic of the marvellous as well. Marvellous fantasy typically recounts actions of mythically-charged individuals that affect the destinies of worlds, dramatic landscapes, often in the form of fantastical kingdoms, as well as magic. To these three, wonders in the fourth sense of cultural otherness should be added.

Tolkien's and Lewis's comments on 'Red Indians', quoted previously, are pertinent here. The enchantment of other-worlds complete in themselves is central to the marvellous aesthetic, and such other-worlds enchant because they are traditionally figured as unthreatening, charmingly other, and not alienating. Tolkien's ([1964] 2001:41) comment that 'Red Indians' are enchanting because they afford 'glimpses of an archaic mode of life' is significantly telling. 'Red Indians' evoke fantasy for Tolkien because, by his definition of this diverse group of peoples, they are irrelevant to a modern context, thus intrinsically evocative of buried antiquity as well as of cultural otherness. Within the imperialist fantasy this translates easily to the otherness of the non-Western cultures that could be described and interpreted in line with what imperial subjectivity desired of them. It is the African-ness of Kukuanaland that is enchanting, and the energy and exhilaration it yields for the white subject, not magic, though the two often overlap. Drawing on Northrop Frye's classification of the romance, Stiebel (2001:38). comments that if 'the essential raw materials for romance are magic and

otherness, then the "ju-ju" in Africa provides the former and the savagery and blackness of Africans provide the latter…' What the imperialist romance does is simply lay bare what Tolkien's and Lewis's comments suggest: that orientalism is embedded deep within the marvellous aesthetic.

In *The Heart of Redness*, cultural practices are also a source of wonder, of the marvellous. Camagu feels awe before the beauty and colour of Qolorha-by-Sea, landscapes haunted by historical wonders which may or may have not been imagined, but also by Qukezwa's singing:

> Camagu has never heard such singing before. He once read of the amaXhosa mountain women who were good at split-tone singing. He also heard that the only other people in the world who could do this were Tibetan monks. He did not expect that this girl could be the guardian of a dying tradition.
> For some time he is spellbound (Mda, 2000:175).

The difference between Haggard and Mda is that the wonder of cultural practice is not evoked in the service of a foreign subjectivity. Throughout the novel, Camagu is on a journey of re-acquaintance with his own Xhosa culture. Camagu in this scene is experiencing wonder for a marvellous Xhosa practice and the effect is that he is 'spellbound', bound through wonder to place. Unlike the three explorers in Haggard's text, Camagu does not return home enriched by encounters with the wonders of a fantasy otherland; otherland is 'home', a South African space in the full sheen of Recovery. Camagu thus stays in Qolorha to give back to that space by participating in various projects for the betterment of the community.

Camagu's being bound to place through enchantment is also in contrast to the Hillbrow scenes where Camagu's desire to get away, to flee to America, is emphasised and this is the crux of the value of Recovery within a postcolonial and post-apartheid context. Recovery

beckons to place, and by extension to the project of national healing, by stirring desirability through enchantment. Culture in this sense is also not framed as homogenised and unchanging. The reminder that Qukezwa's ability is a 'dying tradition' highlights culture as historicised and in continual flux. However, the central source of wonder is the legacy of Nongqawuse's prophecies, something that is positioned in the novel within culture and identity in a highly complicated way.

Warnes (2009b:85) points out that the 'complicating factor in Mda's aestheticisation of landscape is that this particular landscape is thoroughly marked with the traces of history. Nongqawuse's pool, the Amathole Mountains, the forests, plains and rivers and, especially, the sea signify locales of false hope in the historical narrative.' His position is ultimately that '*The Heart of Redness* suggests…the need to recognise the brutal truth that the cattle killing (and more importantly the refusal to sow) led directly to famine, terror and the capitulation of Xhosa resistance to British imperialism' (Warnes, 2009b:86). The caution and hesitation that Warnes is talking about is indicated within the structure of the novel itself. Although the core of the novel is structured as a portal quest narrative, it is significant that Camagu's is not the chapter that opens the novel. The first chapter opens with the perspective of the Unbelievers, which underlines the more problematic aspects of Nongqawuse's legacy, and by extension the entire question of tradition and belief. If Mda's text approximates marvellous aesthetic structure, it does so whilst curiously beginning by interrogating the certainties on which the marvellous turns.

King Solomon's Mines can be considered to fall largely within the aesthetic paradigm of the marvellous, even if it is not situated firmly within it. As such, Haggard's romance can be considered a South African marvellous fantasy which *The Heart of Redness* deconstructs by

its very nature. As noted, Haggard's romance seals its African happy ending away from history, whilst Mda's novel situates it firmly within the realm of historical and geographical reality. Gaylard (2005:85) argues that in magical realism, a genre that appropriates the imaginative for a postcolonial framework:

> …reality, manifestation, or immanence of enchantment is an important aspect of postcolonialism because the instantiation of the apparently fantastic is crucial to defamiliarising realism and hence conveying something of non-Western realities. In a more geographical sense, postcolonialism insists on precise physical location, rejects the postmodern idea that the relationship between the sign and signified is arbitrary, and instantiates the politics of that relationship.

Furthermore, by opening up his nineteenth-century depiction of South African space to history, Mda registers the incompatibility of a happy ending with the erosion of African dignity that took place following the triumph of imperialism and establishment of apartheid. As a result, Mda's equivalent to the fantasy happy ending Haggard engineers is signalled at the *beginning* of the novel in the lines 'these days when peace has returned to the land and there is enough happiness to go around' (Mda, 2000:1). Preconditioned firmly upon the dismantling of imperial and apartheid forces, this happy ending is neither imaginary nor an ending. This seeming fairy-tale 'happily ever after' in effect interrogates the 'what comes after' for the inhabitants of fantasyland. And, in line with this twist, the opening chapter is from the perspective of one of its inhabitants, not the outsider-protagonist. That Mda chooses his novel to begin with the perspective of the Unbelievers may also be significant.

Warnes (2009b:87) argues that

> 'Irreducible elements' of magic in *The Heart of Redness* are distributed equally between Believers and Unbelievers, but carry different valences for each. For those such as Bhonco, who resurrects a 'Cult of Unbelief' for the purposes of recollecting vengeance and suffering, the supernatural is typically negatively charged.

Actually, both the stories of Twin and Twin-Twin culminate in extreme positions and both their endings are charged with negativity. Twin-Twin ultimately becomes 'disillusioned with all religions' and invents 'his own cult of the Unbelievers—elevating unbelieving to the heights of a religion' (Mda, 2000:299). Although Mda inscribes a general questioning of tradition within the novel positively, the rigid doctrines of the Cult of Unbelief are bound up in a cautionary way with feelings of bitterness over past history. Twin's praise name is 'He Who Wakes Up With Yesterday's Anger' and the modern day Unbelievers have ritualised the remembrance of bitterness to such an extent that they have forbidden themselves from shows of joy. Mda emphasises this form of unbelief from the beginning as inhibiting access to joy and by implication healing in the opening descriptions of the Unbelievers' who 'are reputed to be such sombre people that they do not believe even in those things that can bring happiness to their lives' (Mda, 2000:1).

It should, however, be noted that, contrary to Warnes's suggestion that the purpose of the Cult of Unbelief is solely to recollect 'vengeance and suffering', the rituals of recollection are a means to another end: to better appreciate the happiness of the present. Explaining the cult to Camagu, Bhonco's wife NoPetticoat explains:

> They are merely inducing sadness in their lives, so that they may have a greater appreciation of happiness…When the sad times passed and the trials of the Middle Generations were over, it became necessary to create something that would make them appreciate this new happiness of the new age (Mda, 2000:82).

The subsequent result, however, is the refusal to move past the negative aspects of traditional belief to one that is adaptive and healing. Warnes (2009b:87) suggests that the negative implications of the Unbelievers' path are marked in the scars Twin develops from the flogging he receives early in the novel as punishment after a dispute with the prophet Mlanjeni over allegations that his wife is a witch. The scars later become inflamed whenever

Twin-Twin is angered over the devastation of the cattle-killing and colonial expansion. The scars are passed on to every 'first boy-child in subsequent generations of Twin-Twin's tree' (Mda, 2000:12), including Bhonco. In a comic twist, eventually even Bhonco's daughter, Xoliswa Ximiya, who refuses to believe in the magical scars, is affected.

Warnes (2009b:87) asserts that the lesson of the scars is clearly that whether one recognises it or not, the pain of the past is always present', but it should be noted that the Unbelievers in particular emphasise the pain of the past to the exclusion of any other association with their history. In the post-94 setting the Unbelievers 'spend most of their time moaning about past injustices and bleeding for the world that would have been had the folly of belief not seized the nation a century and a half ago and spun it around until it was in a woozy stupor that is felt to this day' (Mda, 2000:1). In contrast, the Believers who hold onto the past in a celebratory way are not similarly marked. However, the Believers are not entirely free from any negative associations, as is seen in the fate of Twin.

Twin refuses to give up his devotion to Nongqawuse even when the amaXhosa have been entirely devastated and brought under colonial dominance. Driven delirious by starvation, we are told that he 'ended up an inmate of the Kaffir Relief House, and there he lived with people who had been made raving mad by starvation, until he went raving mad himself' (Mda, 2000:298). Madness and delirium are the results of embracing fantasy in its most negative manifestation: delusion. The stories of Twin and Twin-Twin thus represent the negative consequences of their respective positions in their most extreme forms, but it is the way these viewpoints play out through their descendants that is important. This is one of the most important differences between Mda's utilization of the past and Haggard's. To designate an African sphere of significance, *King Solomon's Mines* looks backward;

Kukuanaland is Haggard's nostalgic love letter to an African past whose demise he laments but inscribes as inevitable. Mda's novel assesses the past critically but is ultimately forward looking, and looks forward hopefully and constructively.

The opening chapter introduces us to Bhonco, Twin-Twin's descendent, who attributes all the sufferings of the amaXhosa to Nongqawuse's legacy, including those of the Middle Generations who lived under apartheid:

> He does not care that only his close relatives and himself subscribe to it. Nor does it matter to him that people have long forgotten the conflicts of generations ago. He holds to them dearly, for they have shaped his present, and the present of the nation. His role in life has been to teach people not to believe. He tells them that even the Middle Generations wouldn't have suffered if it had not been for the scourge of belief (Mda, 2000:4).

Bhonco's assessment of the effects of the cattle-killing, summarised above, ties in with what Ross (1999:53) suggests has been preserved in the historical record, namely that 'Nongqawuse is now seen as having inaugurated, not the renewal but the mass suicide of the amaXhosa.' Mda thus opens with this perspective to establish ground zero for the debate he is initiating. Even so, it is within the frame of Bhonco's perspective that we are first told that 'Qolorha-by-Sea is a place rich in wonders' (Mda, 2000:6). The source of wonder here, detached firmly from any perspective, imaginative or realist, that validates traditional belief, is situated solely within the depiction of place. Specifically, Qolorha is a place of wonders because its 'rivers do not cease flowing, even when the rest of the country knells a drought. The cattle are round and fat' (Mda, 2000:6). Qolorha is a place of wonder because of its natural beauty, and Mda emphasises throughout the novel that Qolorha is beautiful, and emphasises in particular those aspects of natural beauty that are marked by evocations of the mysterious.

The framing of natural beauty steeped in mystery is an aspect of sublime aesthetics. Descriptions of the effect of Qolorha's beauty on characters always contain a kernel of something that escapes explanation, and the sublime is essentially an experience of 'excess at the level of the sign' in both the fantastic sublime and the sublime proper (Sandner, 2011:25). Mystery might be evoked in a number of ways, but the simplest is marked in the ability to overwhelm over-familiarity in perpetuity. We are told that 'Bhonco was born in this village. He grew up in this village. Except for the time he worked in the cities, he has lived in this village all his life. Yet he is always moved to tears by its wistful beauty' (Mda, 2000:5). Warnes (2009b:85) points out that the various sites that make up Qolorha, 'Nongqawuse's pool, the Amathole Mountains, the forests, plains and rivers and, especially, the sea signify locales of false hope', but what Mda insists is that they are also much more than this.

In addition to this, even within the dismissive perspective of the Unbelievers, Mda's framing of Nongqawuse's legacy compels fascination: 'The Cult of the Unbelievers began with Twin-Twin, Bhonco Ximiya's ancestor, in the days of Prophetess Nongqawuse almost one hundred and fifty years ago. The revered Twin-Twin had elevated unbelieving to the heights of a religion.' (Mda, 2000:4). What Mda is evoking here is the mystique of antiquity, and antiquity, as Tolkien ([1964] 2001:31) notes, 'has an appeal in itself'. Mda deepens the resonance of a space steeped in time by having the first time-slip to the nineteenth century setting occur shortly after this, so that the twin ancestry of the Believers and Unbelievers and mythical overlay of Qolorha are established together.

> The ancestor's name was Xikixa. A patriarch and patrician of the Great Place of King Sarhili. He was the father of the twins, Twin and Twin-Twin. Twin was the first of the twins to be born, so according to custom, he was the younger…The patriarch lived his life with dignity, and brought up his children to fear and respect Qamata, or Mvelinqangi, the great god of all men and women, and to pay homage to those who are in the ground—the ancestors.

Warnes (2009b:87) points out that belief 'in ancestors is, of course, not at all the same thing as belief in Nongqawuse's prophecies', underlining that Mda's novel ascribes many layers to belief and unbelief. The importance of this kind of complexity is subtly indicated in an early episode in which the ancestral twins, indistinguishable from each other up to that point, have a disagreement over the prophet Nxele. The religious question of whether Mlanjeni is a reincarnation of Nxele is the first source of conflict between the twins. Significantly, the twins' father approves of their conflict, noting it as a sign that they are 'becoming human beings' (Mda, 2000:15). The sentiment is echoed in the wider project of the book, which contrasts with *King Solomon's Mines* by insisting on the complexity and diversity of black identity. This complexity is conveyed in the incorporation of organic change, internal variance and conflicts that cannot be simplified into a good-vs-evil dichotomy (as embodied in Ignosi vs Twala). A central source of conflict is the status of the magical or divine.

Twin-Twin's scars themselves become the inscription over time of a conflict over the status of a fantastical event. He receives them as punishment for defending his wife against the charge of witchcraft, earning himself the charge of wizardry which Bhonco later denies. It is unclear whether Twin-Twin's wife is a witch; she fails the test set up by Mlanjeni to rout out witches. What is evident in these passages is that, from the perspective of belief or unbelief, Nongqawuse's legacy evokes the proximity of the magical that lends mystique and hence desirability to Qolorha. This is precisely how Tolkien describes the operation of Recovery; the wonder of the ordinary is recovered through proximity of the magical. The magical itself, for Tolkien, is not the point; what is important is the wonder the magical rekindles within the ordinary. Descriptions of Qolorha's mysterious beauty are never far from allusions to the prophetess and the various extraordinary responses the prophecies led to among both Believers and Unbelievers. Antiquity in these passages is marked as 'the days of Prophetess

Nongqawuse' which is linked here, not to belief, but to the Cult of Unbelief, which has its own mystical aspects.

As noted previously, the Cult of Unbelief has the status of a religion with its own rituals. Camagu's reaction to the rituals of Unbelief encapsulates some of the complexity of Mda's handling:

> In a slow rhythm the elders begin to dance. It is a painful dance. One can see the pain on their faces as they lift their limbs and stamp them on the ground. They are all wailing now, and mumbling things like people who talk in tongues. But they are not talking in tongues in the way that Christians do. They are going into a trance that takes them back to the world of the ancestors. Not the Otherworld where the ancestors live today. Not the world that lives parallel to our world. But to this world when it still belonged to them. When they were still people of flesh and blood like the people who walk the world today (Mda, 2000:81).

Camagu's reaction to this ritual follows Sandner's description of the experience of the fantastic sublime closely. Camagu experiences a confrontation of the mind 'with something new, something certainly not "habitual,"' and reality 'destabilizes as the mind reels in excess… [Thus] the fantastic brings amazement through the realization of estrangement from language'. We are told that 'Camagu is not only filled with deep sorrow, he is also filled with fear' and tells NoPetticoat: 'I am scared. I have never seen anything like this before.'

Newness here, the estrangement from language, consists of a cocktail of otherness. In Sandner's (2011:26) account of the fantastic sublime, in order for the sublime to be pleasurable, the leap must be made from the confrontation of the unknown to the paradoxical interpretation of a 'special ability to abstract and apprehend the vast "beyond" in all its mystery.' In other words, the mind must sense the 'fear-inspiring' transcendent but also experience an exhilarating ability to participate within it. Such participation is enabled by a link that takes the form of a paradoxical grasp of the inscrutable. Within the marvellous, the

paradox is usually resolved by evoking a familiar religious tradition, or a system of antiquated beliefs that register unthreateningly as relics of a past no longer relevant. Pleasure is in this way multiplied through combining the shiver of delight in an essentially imaginative exercise and gaining access to a bygone past. It is at this stage of the experience that Mda's novel departs for a different technique, one with significant ideological implications.

The Unbelievers' ritual, enabling transportation to the past, is in excess of what Camagu knows at the level of *both* the empirically real and tradition. Not only does it expand the boundaries of what may be termed conventions of realism, it also has no correspondence with any system of Xhosa tradition with which Camagu is familiar. When NoPetticoat tells Camagu not to be afraid, he protests, 'I have never heard of this custom before among the amaXhosa'. Mda then enables the leap from fear to pleasure, combining them and thus deepening both in the process, by providing an explanation that emphasises the new, not the old. NoPetticoat explains that Camagu has never heard of the custom among the amaXhosa because it 'is not there. Even the Unbelievers of the days of Nongqawuse never had it. It was invented by the Unbelievers of today' (Mda, 2000:82). The pleasurable evocation of the past is still an element of this experience; it is within the ritual itself. But by having the ritual be an invention of the present, Mda enables an experience of the fantastic sublime without conflating the magical, the traditional and antiquity and complicating the terms on which they are rendered other. As a result, the invented-ness of all tradition is foregrounded, and the imaginative as a historically located process is emphasised without sacrificing pleasure. Having been provided with NoPetticoat's explanation, which enables an accommodation of the transcendent, we are told that 'Camagu no longer wants to stay away. He wants to stay and watch the whole ritual' (Mda, 2000:82).

The ritual by which the Unbelievers evoke sadness is, however, later somewhat undermined. NoPetticoat reveals to Camagu that the trance was not entirely invented for the benefit of the Unbelievers, but was borrowed from the abaThwa, 'those who were disparagingly called the San by the Khoikhoi because to the Khoikhoi everyone who was a wanderer and didn't have cattle was a San' (Mda, 2000:82).

Elwyn Jenkins (2006:123) notes that the San, the first inhabitants of South Africa, 'is one of the most enduring motifs in South African culture'. What is interesting about the San as a motif is that, having almost 'vanished as a distinct racial group', they also serve as markers of loss resulting from racial violence over a period covering both South Africa's colonial and pre-colonial history. Jenkins (2006:123) explains: 'the San's hunter-gatherer way of life inevitably brought them into conflict with successive immigrants: pastoralist Khoi, black African pastoralists and agriculturalists, and whites'. The San as a motif of loss is, moreover, curiously encapsulated in the word 'San' itself, which serves as an awkward placeholder-name for a people who can only be known to modern generations by the names given to them by the groups that destroyed them. 'Also known as the Bushmen, they did not have a name for themselves as a race, but only names for smaller regional groups…Both Bushmen and San (a Khoi term meaning "vagrant") were derogatory appellations, but are used today in the absence of an alternative' (Jenkins, 2006:123). This function as a motif of loss resulting from racial violence is highlighted by Mda when he notes in his narrative that the abaThwa are 'those who were disparagingly called the San by the Khoikhoi because to the Khoikhoi everyone who was a wanderer and didn't have cattle was a San' (Mda, 2000:82), and colours their appearance in *The Heart of Redness*.

Towards the end of the novel, the Unbeliever trance is interrupted by apparitions of the abaThwa, who demand their dance back. Bhonco says that a people who can invent such a powerful dance should not be crossed and emphasises the need to invent a new dance: '…At first it will not have the power of the dance of the abaThwa. But it will gain strength the more we perform it. Perhaps one day it will take us to the world of the ancestors just as efficiently as the dance of the abaThwa' (Mda, 2000:218).

Warnes's (2009b:88) take on this episode is that it

> …serves as something of an irreverent spoof on cultural appropriation, suggesting, once again, that traditions are not sacred, but invented and can therefore be added to or subtracted from depending on the needs of those engaging with them. Of more significance is that the San reclaim their dance because the Unbelievers are not using it wisely. By dwelling in the past and indulging their grief, they are spurning the opportunities for healing…

Warnes's use of the word 'sacred' in this context equates the sacred with the inviolable, that which cannot be altered. However, the episode, if anything, connects sacrilege with precisely the kind of cultural appropriation Warnes describes, and it is therefore taken from the Unbelievers as a consequence. It is not at all clear that the indulgence in grief is the reason for the San reclaiming the dance; no reason is ever given. As NoPetticoat explains, the indulgence in grief is a means to an end, to better appreciate the joy of the present, and Bhonco *does* experience joy. A more likely reason for the reclamation of the trance lies in the significance of the San as a motif of loss resulting from racial violence, further complicating the depiction of historical racial relations in South Africa. Warnes's first point, that Mda is commenting on the ethics of benefiting from someone else's cultural property, is therefore the more likely reason for the reclamation of the dance. The ethical dimension is emphasised in the disrespect the Unbelievers show for the abaThwa even as they benefit from their rituals, calling them by the 'derogatory isiXhosa names for the Khoikhoi and people of mixed

race' (Mda, 2000:218). What the reclamation of the dance does not signify is that rituals are less sacred because they are adaptable; indeed this seems to be Mda's most important point about ritual. When Bhonco says a new, invented dance will not at first have power of the abaThwa's dance, Mda is commenting on how ritual acquires power and mystique over time; he is not suggesting that rituals are timeless.

What is noteworthy in these passages is an example of a strategy that Mda uses throughout the novel. While the strategy varies in form, a notable effect is the emphasis on enchantment while questioning the source of enchantment, underlining that beauty and mystery are not incompatible with questioning. The emphasis on invigorating enchantment allows Mda to demonstrate the potential in magical realism to counteract the paralysis that may result from self-reflexivity: As Gaylard (2005:48). notes:

> The 'in-between and beyond position' can be paralysing, but most often it allows postcolonialists to insist on propinquity and correspondence, and also to oppose both an atavistic traditionalism and a governmental manipulation of the cultural. This 'in between' celebrates not only indeterminacy, but the ability of the imagination to structure and hence understand and invigorate experience.

What is also inscribed is that there are different ways of accessing the sublime pleasure of place, irrespective of belief. Although the Unbelievers are somewhat undermined in the novel as a whole, they still are shown to have some measure of access to the pleasure of Qolorha. The only character that is completely cut off from this pleasure is Xoliswa Ximiya, Bhonco's daughter.

Warnes (2009b:87) remarks that Xoliswa Ximiya 'is the most unbelieving—in the many senses in which this word is used in the novel—of all Qolorha-by-Sea residents'. Not only does Xoliswa share her father's deep hatred of Nongqawuse's legacy, she is also the most

virulently opposing to 'redness' in all the significations of tradition and African-ness the term encapsulates. The other unbelievers, while united in their dismissal of Nongqawuse, vary in their relationships to 'redness'. Bhonco believes in the ancestors and 'does not believe in this new-fangled fashion of building hexagons instead of the tried and tested rondavel [circular hut]' (Mda, 2000:6). Xoliswa's mother, NoPetticoat, 'is one of the amahomba', someone who loves isiXhosa costume much to her daughter's disapproval (Mda, 2000:47).

Xoliswa differs from the other Unbelievers because her grasp of both redness and Westernisation is reductive. She 'thinks that it is high time her parents changed from ubuqaba—backwardness and heathenism. They must become amagqobhoka—enlightened ones—like her. She has brought her parents dresses and suits in the latest European styles' (Mda, 2000:47-48). Xoliswa is an echo of another character in the novel, Mda's depiction of the nineteenth century black missionary Wilhelm Goliath who makes a simplistic equation of Western dress (and by extension, a somewhat reductive understanding of 'Western' culture) with civilization and salvation. In an interesting echo of Haggard's affectionate joke about Good's attachment to civilised dress, Wilhelm Goliath's imperialist equivalencies are 'utterances that were guaranteed to cause a lot of mirth among his listeners. They found it funny that the way to the white man's heaven was through trousers and dresses' (Mda, 2000:54). Xoliswa does not question tradition, but has internalised definitions of African-ness that originate in the most simplistic forms of imperialist discourse. As a result, she is ashamed even of the rituals the Unbelievers have evolved to evoke suffering, rejecting any practice that is not recognisable to her from what she understands to be Western culture. As Camagu remarks towards the end of the novel, Xoliswa 'talks of civilisation by which she means what she imagines to be Western civilisation' (Mda, 2000:286).

Yet Xoliswa is in one important way a perfected product of the Cult of Unbelief, being always marked by sorrow, something even Bhonco has difficulty maintaining due to his love of Qolorha. Camagu observes that her 'uncompromising eyes penetrate you when she is addressing you. Deep inside them lurks a sorrow that cannot be remitted' (Mda, 2000:70-71). Throughout the novel, Xoliswa is so successful at maintaining sorrow and shame over the past to advance her idea of progress, without the aid of ritual, that she shows no access to joy at all.

An important signifier of Xoliswa's difference from other characters in the novel is her complete disregard for Qolorha. Xoliswa is the only character who never remarks on the beauty of Qolorha. She calls Qolorha 'a godforsaken place', and is scornful when Camagu objects that he thinks it is 'the most beautiful place on earth' (Mda, 2000:69). More tellingly, her only expressions of wonder in the novel are directed at foreign sources, particularly the United States of America, which she romanticises as a 'fairy tale country, with beautiful people. People like Dolly Parton and Eddie Murphey…a vast country that is highly technological' (Mda, 2000:71). Her journey is ultimately the counterpoint to Camagu's quest for a dream in the folktale land of Qolorha, and she leaves Qolorha at the end of the novel for a job in Johannesburg. It is this absence of connection to place that positions her more negatively than any other character within the ideology of the novel. An important aspect of this is that Xoliswa is chiefly motivated by a drive to elevate her status in the community on the basis of her authority on progress. The experience of the sublime, in contrast, affords access to humility, which translates in the novel to the willingness to subsume one's own needs in those of the community.

Xoliswa's rejection of tradition, as opposed to questioning it, inhibits her access to the wonder of Qolorha, and Recovery. Questioning in the novel enriches, rather than diminishes, wonder, but it is in the way Mda handles these issues that he accomplishes this. Questioning the magical becomes the means of access to the sublime, and subsequently, to great constructive energy, centred on place. This is seen particularly through the character of Camagu.

Camagu is initially drawn to Qolorha because of NomaRussia, not because of any association with tradition or Nonqawuse. On discovering that NomaRussia is from Qolorha, the birthplace of Nongqawuse's legacy, he reflects that he 'has vague memories of history lessons where he was told about a young girl who deceived the amaXhosa nation into mass suicide. But he never associated her with any real place' (Mda, 2000:39). Yet implicitly, NomaRussia is an image of Nongqawuse because she stirs the imaginative, inspires hope and incites drastic, committed action, leading Camagu to follow her to Qolorha with no clear plan or rationale. The ideals promised by both Nongqawuse and NomaRussia are embodied in place. What Nongqawuse's prophecies promise for the believers is a land of plenty where all will be put to rights, and NomaRussia's singing bears the promise for Camagu of a dream-place where he will be inspired, useful and productive. The status of prophecy (whether it is divinely inspired or not) is irrelevant; it is the *effect* of the question of prophecy, its mystery, which affords this inspiration. However, the promises of both NomaRussia and Nongqawuse, for Camagu, are fulfilled, not in themselves but in Qukezwa, who more than any other character embodies the landscape of Qolorha.

I hinted previously that Mda adapts the feminization of landscape as seen in the imperial romance to inscribe another kind of relationship between Camagu and the land. Warnes

(2009b:85) believes '*The Heart of Redness* is less concerned with reconciling Believers and Unbelievers than it is with reconciling Camagu with his roots,' and Camagu's relationship with his roots is played out through his relationships with the women of Qolorha.

Initially, Camagu is drawn to Qolorha by NomaRussia's singing, which itself functions as an echo of Nongqawuse's prophecies. Like the ancestral Twin, Camagu's double, Camagu is spellbound by the vision suggested in a woman's singing of a fairy-tale space where wonders will restore a land afflicted by invasion and white domination, the legacy of colonialism for Twin and apartheid for Camagu. For Camagu, such a space is where the dream of being inspired and functional will be restored to him. However, when Camagu arrives in Qolorha, he is first struck by Xoliswa Ximiya's beauty. Camagu's initial sympathy with Xoliswa's outlook is a reflection of his own disillusionment, but he is never drawn to her. 'He does not remember seeing anyone quite so beautiful before' but Xoliswa's 'is the kind of beauty that is cold and distant...Not the kind that makes your whole body hot and charges it with electric currents, like NomaRussia's' (Mda, 2000:70-71). Xoliswa's effect on Camagu is appropriate because being alienated from wonder herself, she is not a healing agent, but in need of healing herself. Camagu feels the need 'to hold and protect Xoliswa Ximiya', unlike Qukezwa who he later reflects 'does not need protecting' (Mda, 2000:121).

The viewpoint embodied in Xoliswa is in any case discredited through the way that she is framed on her first appearance. Unaware that Camagu has spent most of his life in America, she humiliates herself by explaining the virtues of the United States on hearing that Camagu intends to travel there. This has the dual effect of undermining the authority Xoliswa assumes on the subject as well as impressing upon the reader the importance of Camagu's cosmopolitan perspective. The broader one's perspective is, Mda suggests, the less other

countries are more exotically alluring than home. It also heightens awareness that the enchanting effects of NomaRussia/Nongqawuse, which have already affected Camagu, are far more potent than Xoliswa's misdirected adulation. Nevertheless, Camagu is initially more sympathetic to Xoliswa's views on progress in Qolorha, conceding to her with a notable lack of enthusiasm for the subject: 'I don't know the issues. But I am sure you're right' (Mda, 2000:75). It is the role of Qukezwa to develop Camagu's directionless passion for Qolorha into a grasp of the issues mentioned above.

Qukezwa first appears in the novel in the form of her ancestral double, the wife of the founding Believer Twin. It is significant that she appears before Nongqawuse is ever mentioned within the ancestral timeline. Also significant is that she is an outsider to the amaXhosa, derided for her Khoi ancestry. For Twin, the strangeness of Qukezwa's religious practices have a spellbinding effect that anticipates the later effects of both NomaRussia and the contemporary Qukezwa on Camagu. Disillusioned with the prophet Mlanjeni, Twin first sees her praying to Tsiqwa, and is 'struck with wonder' (Mda, 2000:23). The passages describing her effects on Twin are draped in the lyrical, reflecting the enchanting effect that she casts on Twin: 'Together they sang the song of Heitsi Eibib…There was no doubt in Twin's mind that he wanted to marry this daughter of the stars…He married her. And for him she danced the dance of the new rain. And of the new moon' (Mda, 2000:25).

Notably Qukezwa, from whom Twin learns more about Tsiqwa, is described as a 'daughter of joy', a counter to the sorrowful Xoliswa. Twin and Qukezwa's experiences together are celebratory and emphasise wonder, and in Twin's openness to the wonder of Qukezwa's beliefs, there is a suggestion that it is Qukezwa who lays the foundation for Twin's openness to belief in Nongqawuse. However, Qukezwa as a source of wonder predates Nongqawuse,

and also outlasts her. Unlike Twin, whose uncompromising belief deteriorates into insanity, the ancestral Qukezwa ultimately decides that the prophecies have failed and returns to her ancestral belief system. The ending of the novel blurs the lines between the contemporary and ancestral Qukezwa through the medium of singing, which, invested with transcendent properties, here transcends time:

> Qukezwa fills the valley with her many voices. She fills the wild beach with dull colours. Colours that are hazy and misty. Grey mist, not white. She sings of Qukezwa walking in the mist. She is so bony. Her eyes are bulging out of her skull. They are resting on her high cheekbones. Her hide skirt is tattered. She does not sport a single strand of beads. Beads were long since exchanged for food. She is the woman of the sea. She is a strandloper. A beach scavenger. As long as the sea yields, she and her son will not go hungry (Mda, 2000:317).

The transcendence of time here is marked, not by timelessness and fossilisation as in *King Solomon's Mines*, but by agency and survival. Although marked by the suffering of tragic events, the ancestral Qukezwa remains active and she survives to continue Twin's line. The image is in direct contrast to the final depictions of both Twin and Nongqawuse herself, both of whom are rendered inactive by their immersion in belief. Twin is ultimately 'too weak to attract the interest of anyone at the labour market' and goes insane as an 'inmate of the Kaffir Relief House' (Mda, 2000: 298). Nongqawuse, always described as unkempt and confused 'in the manner of all great messengers of the spirit world' (Mda, 2000:90) is arrested by the British and shows no awareness of her change in circumstance. In contrast, Qukezwa is always marked by activity and constructive energy.

It is the ancestral Qukezwa who leads the amaXhosa to Qolorha, assuming in effect the role of prophet before Nongqawuse's appearance: 'Qukezwa led the way, for she knew the language of the stars. She rode reinless on Gxagxa, Twin's brown and white horse, which seemed to know exactly where to go without being guided by her' (Mda, 2000:56). It is

Qukezwa who determines the terms on which Qolorha is experienced as charged with healing enchantment and constructive energy. This experience of Qolorha echoes with the 'dream' in Camagu's sense of a place where things happen, a counter to the entropy of the disenchanting Hillbrow. The passages on the ancestral Qukezwa are juxtaposed with scenes depicting her contemporary double, who deftly and effectively combats the negativity of her daily struggles by subsuming herself in dreams 'of Nongqawuse flying with a crow—the Nomyayi bird… She flies with Nomyayi in the land of the prophets (Mda, 2000:52).

Camagu's experience of Qukezwa is, accordingly, also dreamlike and occurs within the experience of dreams that conflate her with NomaRussia and with Qolorha itself. After arriving in Qolorha, Camagu has a recurring dream where he sees NomaRussia as the water flowing over his own body. Later Qukezwa begins 'invading' his sleep in 'dreams that sweep the NomaRussia water from the river' leaving the riverbed, Camagu himself, naked (Mda, 2000:195). The imagery painted here is significantly different from the feminization of landscape within the imperial romance.

In the romance, the landscape offers itself up to the imperialist gaze which is positioned typically at a height over the landscape in a way that conveys power over it. Such power usually enables the authority of the imperialist gaze to interpret the landscape according to the needs of the viewing subject, and to thus order its existence within the range of meanings useful to it. Mda plays on this through the character Dalton, an imperial agent in the days of Nongqawuse who ends his career by establishing a trading store on a hill overlooking Qolorha, but it is never through Dalton's gaze that Qolorha is framed.

Within the contemporary setting, Dalton's double and descendent, also named Dalton, continues to run the trading store, and the store becomes a locus of tension between Believers and Unbelievers as one of the few areas in the novel where Bhonco and Zim converge. Within the opening chapters of *The Heart of Redness*, it is to the gazes of Bhonco and Zim that Qolorha is opened out to the vantage point afforded by the trading store. This effectually overwrites the imperialist gaze with two views that offer conflicting interpretations of the landscape, both of which originate within the community of Qolorha. When Bhonco looks out over Qolorha, we are told that he 'was born in this village. He grew up in this village. Except for the time he worked in the cities, he has lived in this village all his life' (Mda, 2000:5). Zim, the descendent of Qukezwa is even more intimately situated within Qolorha: 'He was circumcised here. His grandfather's fields were here. His whole life is centred in this valley. He is one with Intlambo-ka-Nongqawuse—Nongqawuse's Valley. (Mda, 2000:50-51). But it is through Camagu that Mda most drastically overturns the significations of the imperialist gaze.

Camagu dreams of being the landscape itself, together with the women. NomaRussia appears as the river, rushing and evasive, until Qukezwa, whose singing colours the landscape, sweeps her aside. In both dreams, Camagu is subsumed, part of the landscape but also overcome by it. In contrast with the imperialist gaze that confers power, Camagu's nakedness marks him as vulnerable to the landscape. The relationship with landscape symbolised in these images is reflected in the way Camagu chooses to situate himself within the community of Qolorha to effect healing. Unlike Dalton, whose projects are ways for him to do things for the villagers, Camagu develops projects that restore agency to the villagers rooted within their own understanding and needs. Camagu tells Dalton:

> Your people love you because you do things for them. I am talking of self-reliance where people do things for themselves. You are thinking like the

> businessman you are…you want a piece of the action. I do not want a piece of any action. This project will be fully owned by the villagers themselves and will be run by a committee elected by them in the true manner of co-operative societies (Mda, 2000:286).

The importance of operating in this way is impressed upon Camagu by Qukezwa. Gaylard (2005:52) argues that '…the self in postcolonialism is both multiply connected and multiply alienated, primarily due to the impact of colonialism upon African cultures, but also because of the reactions and disasters of the post-independence era.' For Gaylard, these multiple alienations, all of which are outlined within *The Heart of Redness*, result in a 'pause of undecidability of ethics' that 'insists on a reconceptualisation of hybridity, marginality, connectedness and fictionality within a particular context.' What is particularly significant with regards to Mda is Gaylard's (2005:52-53) observation that any 'such pause is akin to the hesitation that accompanies the magical moment of wonder, a moment that is beyond the real as we have come to know it.' While the 'emergence of self-reflexivity, doubt or pausing in postcolonial African fiction' is in danger of 'signifying decadence' postcolonialism 'may offer…a moment of undecidability that enables, indeed forces, agency, rather than destroying it in a morass of relativism.' Mda's response to this conundrum is embodied in Qukezwa.

Camagu's encounters with Qukezwa are suffused with the mystical but are also learning opportunities, shaped by intimate encounters with the landscape. The narrative never wholly escapes into the abstract or transcendent, but roots the beautiful and the fantastic sublime firmly within the urgency of the historical moment. Enchantment for Mda is always intertwined with social commitment. For example, Qukezwa explains the names and significance of various plant-life to Camagu and then becomes lost in a kind of trance:

> We stood here with the multitudes,' she says, her voice full of nostalgia. 'Visions appeared in the water. Nongqawuse herself stood here. Across the river the valley was full of ikhamanga. There were reeds too. They are no longer there. Only ikhamanga remains. And a few aloes. Aloes used to

> cover the whole area. Mist often covers this whole ridge right up to the lagoon where we come from. It was like that too in the days of Nongqawuse. We stood here and saw the wonders. The whole ridge was covered with people who came to see the wonders. Many things have changed. The reeds are gone. What remains now is that bush over there where Nongqawuse and Nombanda first met the Strangers. The bush. Ityholo-lika-Nongqawuse' (Mda, 2000:120).

The effect on Camagu is instantaneous and overwhelming. He 'is seized by a bout of madness. He fights hard against the urge to hold this girl, tightly, and kiss her all over' but the effect is 'different from the urge he once had: to hold and protect Xoliswa Ximiya. This woman does not need protecting. He does. He is breathing heavily as if he has just climbed a mountain, and his palms are sweating. Every part of his body has become a stranger to him.' Camagu's reaction, particularly his sense of self-alienation, the experience of something in excess of language, and apprehension of self-dissolution, approximates the encounter with the sublime. However, neither Camagu nor Qukezwa experiences paralysis in the moment of trance.

Unlike Nongqawuse, who is always 'confused', Qukezwa is highly rational and deeply pragmatic. She is always active within the landscape, and always armed with sound reasoning as a basis for her actions. Qukezwa is moreover much better at reasoning through her arguments that either Zim or Bhonco. Rather than basing their conflicting positions within reasoned arguments, as Qukezwa never fails to do, 'Camagu concludes that [Bhonco and Zim deliberately] select positions in such a way that they are never to be found on the same side of any issue' (Mda, 2000:105). What drives the conflict between Bhonco and Zim is ultimately a rivalry on which both have become dependent for self-definition. The superficial basis of their conflict is highlighted in the opening passages of the novel in which we are told that 'the early manifestation of their competition' occurred when Zim bought a replica of a dining table purchased by Bhonco with more chairs (Mda, 2000:3). Mda's point here is not to

undercut all validity in the viewpoints expressed by Bhonco and Zim, but to highlight the absurdity of polarisation for the sake of polarisation, and the adoption of views without reason.

In contrast, when Qukezwa argues against the casino development plans for the village,

> Camagu is taken aback by her fervour and her reasoning. She is right. The gambling city may not be the boon the Unbelievers think it will be. It occurs to him that even during construction, few men from the village, if any, will get jobs. Construction companies come with their own workers who have the necessary experience. Of course, a small number of jobs is better than no jobs at all. But if they are at the freedom to enjoy the sea and its bountiful harvests and the woods and birds and the monkeys…then those few jobs are not really worth it. There is a lot of sense in what Qukezwa is saying. He is grudgingly developing some admiration for this scatterbrained girl with a Standard Eight education who works as a cleaner at Vulindlela Trading Store (Mda, 2000:118).

In the passage above, Qukezwa's status as a 'scatterbrained girl with a Standard Eight education' is juxtaposed with her innate practicality and shrewd observation of the village's needs. In contrast with the condescending Xoliswa, it seems Qukezwa possesses these qualities because her ability to immerse herself within the landscape extends to an empathetic immersion within her community. Camagu is influenced by Qukezwa accordingly. While Twin, in his inactive immersion in fantasy, is a devotee of Nongqawuse, Camagu is a follower of Qukezwa. Both Camagu and Qukezwa use enchantment to obtain access to energy that enables reasoning and constructive action. It is not that Mda ultimately undermines the significations of Nongqawuse's legacy; the narrative is dynamic in its depiction of the various ways in which one can be positioned in relation to the cattle-killing, and to the wider spectrum of tradition itself. Qukezwa is simply positioned as the most useful embodiment of that relationship. The relationship between black subject and tradition embodied in Qukezwa takes on its fullest implications with regard to a central concern of the novel: tourism.

The intersections between fantasy and tourism occur at the level at which fantasy enables the narratives that structure tourism. Marvellous fantasy in particular, like tourism, trades crucially on the desirability of place. Such desirability might turn on the fascination with the frightening or horrific, but such experiences are likely to position the source of horror as non-threatening, usually by association with a *buried past.* It is not difficult to see Prozorov's (2010) notion of temporal othering at work in tourist attractions that delight in narratives of medieval cruelty or supposedly antiquated customs; this kind of framing enables access to a past constructed as other which simultaneously confirms the definition and superiority of the modern identity. As Prozorov (2010) points out, implicit in such narratives is cultural othering; cultures that are shown to resemble the othered European past are likewise inferior, misguided, other. The Kukuana people in *King Solomon's Mines* are implicitly inferior to the English heroes because no history of African evolution enables a moment of confrontation with an inferior past as occurs for Curtis, Quatermain and Good. The way the African as a constructed category is positioned in Haggard's romance is reflected in the description by Gaylard below:

> …histories and cultures were often commodified for consumption by metropolitan markets via their apparent authenticity. This commodification suggests both voyeurism on the part of cultural producers and their markets, and that this voyeurism is fuelled by nostalgia for a putatively lost authenticity within the dominant culture…The process of commodifying authenticity consisted in removing objects and practises from their spatial and temporal context and making them available on the market as authentic offerings, thus denying the 'Third World' cultural dynamism. Typically this 'golden ageism' posited ethnic rootedness in an authentic archaic which tended to be embodied by images of landscape; organic connectedness to a place; naturalised gender roles; the confirmation of rituals around birth, puberty, adolescence, parenthood and death; the validation of cultural mores and values (Gaylard, 2005:23).

The tourism industry as an embodiment of the commodification of histories and cultures plays a central role in *The Heart of Redness*. What is missing in Gaylard's assessment above, but foregrounded in Mda's novel, is the reliance of so-called indigenous communities on the

markets that demand this kind of packaging. Qolorha, to a great extent, is seen to subsist on tourism, and it is tourism of a kind that trades on the desirability of place as determined by the marvellous paradigm: natural beauty rendered wonder-inducing through proximity to the magical:

> Tourists often come to enjoy the serenity of this place, to admire birds and plants, and to go to the Valley of Nongqawuse to see where the miracles happened. They book in at the Blue Flamingo, and leave their children with part-time nannies while they walk or ride all over the valley, or swim in the rough sea (Mda, 2000:5).

Bhonco's wife NoPetticoat earns her living working as one of the nannies at the Blue Flamingo Hotel. Ironically, because Bhonco is unable to collect his pension due to an administrative complication, both Unbelievers are financially dependent on the appeal Nongqawuse's legacy holds for tourists. Xoliswa articulates the seeming contradiction in the attraction of Nongqawuse's legacy for the white tourists when she points out that Dalton's 'white forebears in the days of Nongqawuse were grouped with the amaGogotya—the Unbelievers—as people who would be swept into the sea on the day of the rising of the dead' (Mda, 2000:110). Moreover, the novel spends a great deal of time emphasising the inherent opposition between the original colonisers and the cattle-killing movement. What Xoliswa misses is that the attraction of Nongqawuse's legacy within the narratives that structure tourism operates essentially within the inherently Eurocentric marvellous fantasy paradigm: Nongqawuse's legacy is appropriated as pure imaginative indulgence. Her legacy produces enchantment for the tourists because it is non-threatening; it poses no real threat to either their cultural or modern identities.

From the perspective that tourism in Qolorha is rooted in an othering appropriation manufactured for outsiders, Xoliswa's views on tradition and progress are somewhat sympathetic. Her views on Nongqawuse and African identity might be narrow and glorify

Western progress, but it is significant that Xoliswa's feelings are ultimately irrelevant. Tourism trades on the commodification of African identity as determined by what most holds appeal for foreign markets. There is also a great deal of validity in Xoliswa's objections outlined below:

> Xoliswa Ximiya is not happy that her people are made to act like buffoons for these white tourists. She is miffed that the trails glorify primitive practices. Her people are like monkeys in a zoo, observed with amusement by white foreigners with John Dalton's assistance. But, worst of all, she will never forgive Dalton for taking them to Nongqawuse's Pool where they drop coins for good luck. She hates Nongqawuse. The mere mention of her name makes her cringe in embarrassment. That episode of the story of her people is a shame and a disgrace (Mda, 2000:110).

Xoliswa sees the preservation of anything 'traditional' as 'cultural tourism', which locks Xhosa identity to a regrettable past that is, for her, a great source of shame. Although Xoliswa's association of 'backwardness' with tradition and 'civilisation' with Westernisation is portrayed as problematic, the more general sentiments underlying her objections are supported by the novel. Camagu quickly discovers that tourism in Qolorha is shown to do exactly what Xoliswa despises about it. The passage describing tourism in the village is worth quoting in full, as Mda very clearly lays out the problematic aspects of it:

> Camagu learns that NoManage and NoVangeli are two formidable women who earn their living from what John Dalton calls cultural tourism. Their work is to display amasiko—the customs and cultural practices of the amaXhosa—to the white people who were brought to their hut in Dalton's four-wheel-drive bakkie, after he has taken them on various trails to Nongqawuse's Valley, the great lagoon, the shipwrecks, rivers and gorges, and the ancient middens and cairns. Often when these tourists come, NoManage pretends she is a traditional healer, what the tourists call a witchdoctor, and performs magic rites of her own concoction. At this time NoVangeli and the tourists hide some items, and NoManage uses her supernatural powers to discover where they are hidden. Then the tourists watch the two women polish the floor with cowdung. After this the tourists try their hand at grinding mealies or sorghum on a grinding-stone or crushing maize into samp with a granite or wooden pestle. All these shenanigans are performed by these women in their full isiXhosa traditional costume of the amahomba, which is cumbersome to work in. Such costume is meant to be worn only on special occasions when people want to look

> smart and beautiful, not when they are toiling and sweating. And the tourists pay good money for all this foolery! (Mda, 2000:110).

The key word in the passage quoted above is 'display'; the tourism described above is positioned as a display for the benefit of 'white tourists'. The result of the display framework is that Xhosa tradition becomes a 'pretence' that plays to a foreign understanding that is pre-imposed upon it. NoManage 'pretends' she is a traditional healer, and her performance is tailored to 'what the tourists call a witchdoctor'. The 'foolery' that positions the tourists as comically duped is, however, undercut by the reminder of the 'good money' they bring in, upon which the villagers are dependent.

Dalton, who spearheads cultural tourism in Qolorha out of a sincere wish to improve the village, later proposes an expansion of his cultural village operation:

> He already has two formidable women in NoManage and NoVangeli who are experienced in entertaining tourists by displaying cultural performances and practices of the amaXhosa. This is a proven kind of business. Tourists like visiting such cultural villages to see how people live. The people will have proper isiXhosa huts rather than the new-fangled hexagons that are found all over Qolorha. Women will wear traditional isiXhosa costumes as their forebears used to wear. They will grind millet and polish the floors with cowdung. They will draw patterns on the walls with ochre of different colours. There will be displays of clay pots and other earthenware items. Tourists will flock to watch young maidens dance and young men engage in stick fights. They will see the abakwetha initiates whose bodies are covered in white ochre. They will learn how the amaXhosa of the wild coast live (Mda, 2000:284-285).

Hearing this, Camagu's essential argument is that the cultural village is

> dishonest. It is just a museum that pretends that is how people live. Real people in today's South Africa don't lead the life that is seen in cultural villages. Some aspects of that life perhaps are true. But the bulk of what tourists see is the past…a lot of it an imaginary past. They must be honest and say that they are attempting to show how people used to live. They must not pretend that's how people live now (Mda, 2000:285).

However, even before Camagu's objections are voiced, Dalton's outline provides a telling counterpoint to the depiction of Xhosa culture within the novel itself. As shown in the novel, the amaXhosa do not only live in huts, but in different kinds of dwellings. Different kinds of Xhosa costume are worn on specific and varying occasions, some of which have emerged only over time. Pension day, which has become an occasion where traditional dress is worn, is one such example. Adaptations of traditional costume have also appeared in the fashions of the city, a modern development. The novel also depicts a specific episode emphasising that young girls only dance at certain functions, and that the appropriateness of these dances is in debate (Mda, 2000:172). Initiates do not fight with sticks in the middle of the village, and Camagu himself was never such an initiate despite his Xhosa identity. Contrary to what Dalton says, this is not 'how the Xhosa of the wild coast live', but the dishonesty of the cultural village is hardly its most problematic aspect.

Like Kukuanaland, the cultural village is a fantasy of Xhosa traditions torn from the living, fluctuating realities that give those traditions meaning and relevance. Cultural tourism emphasises difference and quaintness and offers itself up in display to an othering audience in active service to that othering. As Xoliswa points out, 'her people are like monkeys in a zoo, observed with amusement by white foreigners with John Dalton's assistance' (Mda, 2000:110). Most importantly, what is silenced and most notably absent from Dalton's vision of the cultural village are the many debates depicted in the novel among the amaXhosa about the meaning, application and relevance of customs, both in the past and the present. For example, Bhonco appeals to a notion of tradition as timeless in his derision of nature conservation: 'Our forefathers lived to be greybeards without imposing such stupid laws on themselves' (Mda, 2000:190). Oddly it is Dalton himself that argues that Bhonco's appeal to tradition is selective, pointing out that 'King Sarhili himself was a very strong

conservationist. He created Manyube, a conservation area where people were not allowed to hunt or chop trees' (Mda, 2000:190). When Qukezwa is tried for the cutting of trees, Chief Xikixa argues that according to tradition, Qukezwa cannot be charged because, as an unmarried woman, she is a minor. Qukezwa argues that the law is outdated and that in the 'new South Africa where there is no discrimination, it does not work' (Mda, 2000246). This initiates a many-sided debate about the construct of minority as it is determined by custom, law and most importantly, the requirements of context. The depiction of such negotiation between tradition and application is essential to the portrayal of cultural relevance.

Essentially a version of Kukuanaland, the meanings of the cultural village are determined by the desires of a foreign subjectivity and rendered static. As such, it is irrelevant outside the parameters of those desires and conveys nothing of the continuing relevance and complex humanity of its practitioners. Camagu continues: 'It is an attempt to preserve folk ways…to reinvent culture. When you excavate a buried precolonial identity of these people…a precolonial authenticity that is lost…are you suggesting that they currently have no culture…that they live in a cultural vacuum?' (Mda, 2000:286). The implication of cultural impoverishment within excavations of precolonial authenticity that Camagu is raising is conveyed clearly in *King Solomon's Mines*. Contrasted with the idealised and historically irrelevant Kukuanaland are Haggard's many portrayals of modern Africans in various states of degradation at worst, or useful servitude, at best.

There are also implications for the empowerment of the villagers inherent within these tourist structures. Although Dalton has the village's best interests at heart, and NoManage and NoVangeli clearly benefit from tourist ignorance, an earlier episode in the novel underlines the limits of such empowerment.

> NoPetticoat came home from babysitting fuming that white people from England…made a monkey of her…They asked her to talk into the machine in her language. And say what? Anything. As long as it was in the clicky language. She uttered some words which meant absolutely nothing. Then they asked her to sing. She sang a few notes into the machine, even though by now she was feeling foolish. Fellow workers were looking at her, laughing. Then the tourists asked her to dance. Her dignity was hurt, but she had to do it since she didn't want the hotel manager to accuse her of being rude to guests (Mda, 2000:163).

Bhonco is furious at the way his wife has been treated, but in relaying the episode to Dalton, Dalton does not understand why the display is any different from the concerts NoPetticoat performs in at the hotel. The incident foregrounds the differences from NoPetticoat's concert performances as inhering within a demeaning form of tourism. NoPetticoat's culture is put on display at demand, dislocated from any context that would give it meaning. Furthermore, the display negates her agency, as she has no choice in the matter. The narratives that structure tourism in Qolorha, which operations such as Dalton's cultural village support, predetermine NoPetticoat's role. Ultimately, such narratives enable a situation where NoPetticoat's actions can be demanded as a display of exotica and difference, without semantic substance.

By focusing on tourism as a major theme, *The Heart of Redness* foregrounds the close relationship between the desirability of place and the marketability of place. It thus initiates a discussion around a topic that is central to the usefulness of the marvellous paradigm in South African post-democracy literature. The early sections of the novel underline the usefulness (perhaps necessity) of Recovery in combating the 'multiple alienations' that result from confrontation with the failures of a post-democratic reality. Recovery in this context must do more than restore desirability to the ordinary, as it does in Tolkien's paradigm; it must reinvigorate the commitment to national healing. To enable this, the desirability of place is crucial. The novel then goes on to address the terms on which the desirability of place can be effectively empowering.

Plans for a casino development in Qolorha embody Xoliswa's notion of a counter to tourist schemes like the cultural village because it fits a notion of progress that is narrowly 'Western': 'This is a lifetime opportunity for Qolorha to be like some of the holiday resorts in America. To have big stars like Eddie Murphey and Dolly Parton come here for holidays,' she tells Camagu (Mda, 2000:73). However, Qukezwa points out the inherent disadvantage of the resort for the villagers of Qolorha:

> The gambling city may not be the boon the Unbelievers think it will be. It occurs to him that even during construction, few men from the village, if any, will get jobs. Construction companies come with their own workers who have the necessary experience. Of course, a small number of jobs is better than no jobs at all. But if they are at the freedom to enjoy the sea and its bountiful harvests and the woods and birds and the monkeys…then those few jobs are not really worth it (Mda, 2000:118).

As an alternative to the resort, Camagu establishes the co-operative society that later develops into plans for a backpacker's hostel:

> The villagers must come together, and using the natural material that is found in the village, the very material that they use to build and thatch their houses, they must build a backpacker's hostel in Qolorha. There are many tourists who like to visit unspoilt places for the sole purpose of admiring the beauty of nature and watching birds without killing them. Such tourists would enjoy the hospitality of the amaGcaleka clan in self-catering rondavels or in the hostel with a kitchen and a dining room. Authentic food of amaXhosa such as umngqusho, the maize samp that is cooked with beans, would be prepared for the guests. So would various types of shellfish such as amaqonga, imbhaza, amangquba and imbhatyisa, which are plentiful in the rough sea. Many people would come for the seafood, especially if it is cooked in the unique manner of the people of Qolorha. Here he has in mind Qukezwa's cooking that converted him to seafood when he first visited Zim's homestead (Mda, 2000:275).

What Camagu describes above is a tourist construct that taps into a notion of 'authenticity' as rooted in historical context rather than 'otherness', and tradition that has been disconnected from timelessness. This alternative tourist construct has clear implications for an alternative framing of place to that of the marvellous paradigm whilst still trading principally on desirability. Such tourism requires the unity and agency of the villagers themselves, and only

utilizes culture as determined by contextual relevance; for example, the hostel will be constructed from 'the very material' that is already being used 'to build and thatch their houses'. While the construct is not indifferent to the appeal to cosmopolitan markets, the market for such tourism is selected based on the ecological requirements of the village, not by what most appeals to tourists. What Mda is outlining here is a construct of desirable place that attempts to balance appeal (to local and global tourists/readers), with cultural relevance and an authenticity that leaves room for self-reflexivity. Camagu's final reflection that he is inspired, not by what he believes tourists would pay for, but by what he himself has enjoyed in the village as a tourist, is especially significant. It foregrounds the importance of Camagu's perspective as a black tourist in the novel which has implications for various aspects that impinge on the desirability of place.

The early sections of the novel highlight Camagu's role as a black tourist when Bhonco identifies him as such with great surprise: 'We only see white tourists here. Mostly stupid ones who come to Qolorha because a foolish girl once lied that she saw miracles here' (Mda, 2000:67). In its exoticising of home, the marvellous fantasy rhetoric likewise turns its readers into tourists of the home space, tourists of subjectivity. Although the marvellous often others the past as a by-product, in turning its readers into tourists, it exoticises the self in the service of Recovery, the restoration of wonder. By turning his readers into tourists of home, the marvellous combats, as Tolkien ([1964] 2001:58) phrased it, 'a false sense of appropriation' enabling a 're-gaining of a clear view' so that things can be seen 'as we are (or were) meant to see them – as things apart from ourselves.' Camagu has personal stakes in the community of Qolorha centred on identity, and yet is removed enough from Qolorha's world to see it with fresh eyes and navigate the accumulation of detail that Mendelsohn (2008:9) finds characteristic of marvellous fantasy. From Camagu's perspective, the black tourist assumes a

crucial role as a nexus of subjectivity and otherness that enables wonder without alienating, Recovery without orientalism, sublime experience without domination.

The Heart of Redness offers a multiplicity of considerations for entry into the discussion of what fantasy means in a South African, and also any diverse, global context. The most important question it raises is what should be assumed to be fantastic and what realist to a diverse readership? These considerations may be embodied by the magical realist subgenre as a whole.

It must be emphasised that magical realism is not a postcolonial version of fantastic literature, but a postcolonial version of *realist* literature that nevertheless challenges the fundamentals underlying the definitions of, and divisions between, fantasy and realism. Unlike other genres, magical realism is not a discrete category, but by definition questions the very logic according to which realism and fantasy are asserted to exist. When assumptions are built into the ontological basics of narrative, the result is inevitably to sacrifice inclusivity. If, on the other hand, such assumptions cannot be made, how can such basic aspects as fantasy and realism be established?

Mda's solution, in *The Heart of Redness* at least, appears to be to foreground the diversity of opinion and perspective on the level of plot, resulting in the irreverent orientation of magical realism that Warnes identifies in the work. In differentiating between faith-based magical realism and irreverent magical realism, Warnes (2009a:14-15) asserts that

> faith-based magical realism operates metonymically, while that of irreverent magical realism operates metaphorically...In faith-based magical realism, the supernatural event or presence may stand synecdochically or metonymically for an alternative way of conceiving of reality usually derived from a non-Western belief system or world-view. By contrast, in the irreverent strands of magical realism such an event or presence, which is not

> rationalised or explained away, nonetheless stands in place of an idea or a set of ideas, say, about the ways language constructs reality, or about the incapacities of binaristic thinking.

Warnes' definition of irreverent magical realism comes remarkably close to marvellous fantasy wherein the supernatural is also 'not rationalised or explained away' but is mechanised as metaphor. Camagu himself comes to this conclusion on the subject of Nonqawuse's prophecies when he says at the end of the novel that 'it is wrong to dismiss those who believed in Nongqawuse as foolish' because her 'prophecies arose out of the spiritual and material anguish of the amaXhosa nation' (Mda, 2000:283). This is not a magical realist interpretation of Nongqawuse's visions, it is a marvellous one that limits the significations of the supernatural to a metaphor for an ideological or (in this case) psychological phenomenon. Furthermore, in registering this signification within the narrative of *The Heart of Redness*, Mda inscribes Camagu's interpretation of the visions as a marvellous fantasy from a realist perspective. In other words, this would seem to make the novel a realist novel incorporating a character, Camagu, reading the narrative of the cattle-killing through an interpretative lens identical to marvellous fantasy criticism. An analogy would be a character in a realist novel discussing the metaphorical meanings of *The Lord of the Rings*.

The reason Camagu's interpretation does not render the novel realist is that there are a wide variety of perspectives on the magical in the novel, and Camagu's is not given primacy. Through the lens of the Unbelievers, the abaThwa really do appear as apparitions to demand their trance back. Neither Unbelievers nor Believers doubt Zim's power to send birds to torment Bhonco. The ancestral scars really do appear on Xoliswa Ximiya, much to her own disgust. And Camagu himself interprets the appearance of 'Majola, the brown mole snake that is the totem of his clan' as a foretelling of good fortune (Mda, 2000:112). The novel is

thus magical realist in the irreverent mode in its incorporation of a diversity of perspectives, a novel in which supernatural events gesture to 'an idea or a set of ideas…about the ways language constructs reality, or about the incapacities of binaristic thinking' (Warnes, 2009a:15). In contrast, while marvellous fantasy does not explain away the supernatural, the significations of its metaphors are limited to ideology and do not extend to the indeterminacy of reality itself, at least not in marvellous fantasy in the purely Tolkien-esque mould.

Irreverent magical realism, then, is quite similar to the pure fantastic in Todorov's scheme, in which the status of the fantastic remains unclear. The difference is that indeterminacy in Mda's novel is not productive of anxiety and alienation, but of the inspiring, enchanting energies associated with the marvellous. I need to reiterate at this point that the aim of this thesis is not to classify each novel as one genre or another, but to use genre to interrogate how language and structure are used to depict place, and that considering the classifications goes some way towards this.

In *The Heart of Redness*, genre criticism can be used to identify the way that magical realism in the irreverent mode can utilise various structural elements of marvellous fantasy whilst still incorporating a diversity of perspectives that are foregrounded on the level of plot. While this does seem to be one method of handling the complication of diverse ontologies in a context like South Africa, as a norm it could prove a very laboured way of approaching story-telling, relying heavily on exposition.

But the marvellous aesthetic is no stranger to this conundrum; in the construction of secondary worlds, writers of marvellous fantasies have long faced the challenge of downloading copious information about invented mythologies, culture and history in the

service of world-building without deteriorating into textbooks of the imaginary. Such exposition is handled variously across a wide spectrum of skill and effectiveness, but one important strategy that appears to be inherent to the genre is the tendency to offset exposition with the imaginative immersion in place. The experience of place can derive much from exposition, but in itself always comes down to imaginative enchantment of the senses through lush description. Combined with the strategies of the portal-quest structure and the aesthetic rendering of the sublime, marvellous fantasy provides many mechanisms for the depiction of desirable places for a diverse readership that need not necessarily replicate the orientalism evident in Haggard's work and the marvellous works that followed it. *The Heart of Redness* showcases ways of utilising such mechanisms in new ways, incorporating questioning, a multiplicity of subjectivity, and the importance of national healing in an effective depiction of a truly desirable place.

Chapter 4

Sello Duiker: Children, Tradition and Places of Horror

In this thesis, I have attempted to identify the many factors that need to be considered when analysing the effects of a South African magical space in a work of literary fiction. I have considered rhetorical strategies specific to the structural characteristics of marvellous fantasy and examined the way that these have been configured in depictions of South African magical places in works with both imperialist and postcolonial messages. Lastly, I have considered the perspective provided within magical realist views of both modernity and magic to investigate how such spaces function within a discourse about the uses of fantasy in South African literature. In this chapter, I will be analysing in a similar way the depiction of magical space in *The Hidden Star* (2006) by Sello K. Duiker as an example of immense but somewhat frustrated potential. In doing so I will be considering in particular the novel's position as a South African book for children.

The Hidden Star is the only children's fantasy examined in this thesis and it was chosen because it has been presented as a text enabling recovery in the mode of marvellous fantasy. Molly Brown (2008a:267), for instance, writes that *The Hidden Star* is 'rooted in the realities of contemporary [South African] life' and that magical figures derived 'from the stories of most of South Africa's tribal groupings leap into life against the familiar background of precisely the sort of urban slum where they are often most easily forgotten and rejected'. This, Brown argues, 'makes the novels' message of hope even more valid'. Brown's reading of *The Hidden Star*, in which the magical evokes positive feelings in close proximity to the familiar, definitely suggests the novel enables Recovery, a function of marvellous fantasy. The ability of the novel to enact the Recovery of place specifically is also implied in another

article by Brown (2008b:173) in which she suggests that the fantasy elements of the novel enable a way 'of redeeming the bleakest of environments'. Yet, a close reading of the three novels analysed in this study seems to indicate that *The Hidden Star* is actually the work in which the operations of wonder and Recovery are most frustrated. In terms of the analytic tools made available by fantasy criticism, *The Hidden Star* seems to represent a mixed fantasy aesthetic, combining the portal quest structure typical of the marvellous mode with other forms. Moreover, the book concludes with a happy ending that seems at odds with the transcendent implications of its mythic structure, and it is characterised in its story development more by unease than wonder. In addition, while the novel utilizes many of the postcolonialist deconstructive elements found in *The Heart of Redness*, it is somehow more anxiety-ridden than Mda's work whilst simultaneously encoding much more simplistic messages about identity and traditional knowledge.

Within the history of English fiction, fantasy has a long and contested association with children's literature. Specifically, assumptions about the genre's didactic qualities, simplistic constructions of good and evil, and naïve happy endings have been seen as more appropriate for young readers than older, supposedly more sophisticated, ones. In her 1984 study, tellingly entitled *In Defence of Fantasy,* Ann Swinfen (1984:1) observes that writers of marvellous fantasy have 'often been obliged…to publish as children's writers.' Mendelsohn (2008:xix) finds the most potentially didactic of narrative structures, the portal-fantasy, to be characteristic of marvellous texts, and it is a children's fantasy, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C.S. Lewis, that she discusses as a 'classic' example of this structure. As remarks by Wendy Katz (1987:34) in the context of Haggard's works show, this reputation for anti-intellectualism is one that marvellous fantasy shares with its generic antecedent, the romance, as well as with children's literature.

C.S. Lewis (1980:207) remarks that the best reason for writing a children's story is when 'a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say.' His view of children's literature as an art form in itself suggests the aesthetic specificities of children's literature and its unique possibilities. Fantasy fiction produced specifically for children has a special dynamic regarding the depiction of place and pleasure. While the connection between place and pleasure may take various forms in children's fantasy literature, a notable one is related specifically to how spaces empower children with agency that they do not always have in adult-dominated settings. Such agency may be enabled by the magical possibilities specific to a mythopoeic space. The desirability of place in fantasy for children is very closely determined by the demarcation of children's space and adult space:

> A recurring characteristic of canonical children's literature in English is the designation of special spaces of childhood into which only children may pass. The frequency of these locations in beloved children's works for young people is a testament to the way in which childhood itself is often seen as a world apart, with its own logic and landmarks that distinguish it from adult reality (Cecire, Field, Finn and Roy, 2015:1).

Such demarcations often overlap with spaces wherein the child protagonists feel disempowered and/or undervalued, or powerful and/or special. In fantasy for children, magic is often the deciding factor in how these spaces are experienced. Thus it is not surprising that these stories most often take on the form of the 'magical child', and/or 'chosen one' plot whereby specialness is conferred on a child by the discovery of magical powers and/or an important destiny. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books are the most famous example of this. The specificities regarding the relationship between space and pleasure in children's literature means that it is important to include a children's fantasy in a study of this kind.

The Hidden Star tells the story of a young girl called Nolitye who embarks on a quest to recover the lost pieces of a magical stone. A great deal of importance, specialness and power

is conferred upon Nolitye when she discovers her destiny to defeat Ncitjana, who desires the stone for evil purposes. Nolitye's specialness is later compounded when she discovers her identity as a descendant of a long line of traditional healers. On her journey, she is aided by her friends Bheki and Four Eyes and the ancestral spirit Nomakhosi, as well as the spirit of the stone itself. To complete her quest, Nolitye grapples with challenges both magical and mundane, including evil witches, bullies and monstrous creatures. Nolitye must also defeat the evil witch Sylvia who has been disguising herself as Nolitye's mother for most of Nolitye's life. When all the pieces of the stone are united and Sylvia is exposed as an imposter and defeated, Nolitye finally descends into a mythopoeic underworld to rescue both her real mother and father, who have been held captive by Ncitjana. In doing so, Nolitye restores the stone to its place as the source of knowledge and prosperity for her people.

Like *The Heart of Redness*, *The Hidden Star* implicitly rejects the Eurocentric structure of the imperial romance primarily by centralising black African subjectivity through its main character, Nolitye. The centralisation of black subjectivity in a children's book is particularly important because, as Elwyn Jenkins (2006:xi) notes, '[m]ost children's books in South Africa have been written by white people in English or Afrikaans.' Themes of identity and tradition crisscross in *The Hidden Star* which is, as Warnes (2009b:85) remarks about *The Heart of Redness*, more concerned with reconciling its young black protagonist with her cultural roots than anything else. While Duiker's novel peripherally conveys various messages about 'the importance of friendship, loyalty and trust' while also warning readers 'of the potential dangers of using witchcraft and dark forces for evil purposes' (Inggs, 2011:95-96), the centrality of restoring traditional knowledge to 'an alienated youth' (Inggs, 2011: 104) is signalled in the novel's title. When Nolitye restores the magic stone, the stone itself declares that knowledge 'that had been obscured, like a hidden star, has been restored to

you' (Duiker, 2006:231). The kind of knowledge signified in the stone's declaration is evident in the form taken by Nolitye's quest to unite the pieces of the stone into a whole.

Roughly towards the middle of the novel, a mythological backdrop to the strange events occurring in Nolitye's world is explained to her. Nolitye is told how Nkulunkulu of the Heavens placed a special stone of knowledge in a cave and sent messages from the Animal, Reptile and Insect kingdoms to tell the tribes to bring offerings to the cave to learn knowledge and become prosperous. But the Chameleon was slow, and his tribe did not prosper. Ncitjana, the Mean One, is a descendent of the unlucky tribe, and his ancestor's sons split the stone and scattered it across the land as Nomakhosi explains:

> …each one to start his own tribe. But wisdom and wealth do not enter this way. The power of the stone was lost. And that…is why there is so much fighting among the different groups and individual people today. When it was in one piece, the stone used to keep people together' (Duiker, 2006:82-84).

The mythological origins ascribed to the magic stone embed the stone as a symbol of various sources of empowerment for Nolitye and her people, namely knowledge, prosperity and unity. However, it is traditional knowledge that Nolitye must acquire to succeed in her quest. Since Nolitye is established at the beginning of the story as a hardworking student with a natural thirst for knowledge, it is clear that she is lacking in neither intelligence nor the kind of learning afforded by the modern school system. What Duiker instead inscribes through the challenges Nolitye faces from the supernatural forces that oppose her is the lack of and need for knowledge about a magical worldview found in African mythology, folklore and traditional healing. When Nolitye asks why the local drunk Ntate Mathews and the dark witch MaMtonga know things about the magic stone, Nolitye is told that 'they are elders in the community. They know things about our people and culture that a young one like you cannot possibly imagine' (Duiker, 2006:84).

Fantasy provides a unique vehicle for acquainting a readership with a cultural heritage of traditional mythology, especially in the context of the children's novel. Inggs (2011:96-97) makes the important observation that 'Duiker attempted to familiarise his audience with the cultural heritage of the space in which the story is set and to reflect the 'magical culture' referred to by Mda of which Duiker is also a product.' Inggs (2011:97) continues:

> It seems clear that Duiker wished to acquaint his readers with characters and phenomena from the oral folktale tradition of South Africa while at the same time presenting an image of contemporary urban reality, adversely affected by issues such as unemployment, alcoholism and school-bullying.

When handled cleverly, magical narratives can provide alternative visions of reality using elements from traditional mythology, thereby inscribing the value of a cultural heritage in the process. Such validation can take two forms. One form of validation is most common in marvellous fantasy; this is the narrative in which the mythological enables metaphorical vehicles for meanings which are relevant and useful in the non-magical world, especially meanings relating to invisible forces such as human will and psychology. Consider, for example, Sheila Egoff's (1981:81) argument that children's fantasy stories go 'beyond realism to reveal that we do not live entirely in a world of facts, that we also inhabit a universe of the mind and spirit where the creative imagination is permanently struggling to articulate meaning and values'. An example is the patronus in the Harry Potter books. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), the patronus is described as a spell which conjures a corporeal projection of positive energy used to repel Dementors, frightening creatures which feed on hope and joy leaving only fear and despair. While the patronus and the Dementor have visual and physical attributes that allows them to function within the plot of the Harry Potter universe, they also function metaphorically as a practical lesson about thinking positively to counter self-doubt and depression. Rowling's use of the wizard figure from European fairy tale is in this way validated as a useful metaphor for the handling of

emotional and psychological forces. On an aesthetic level, the use of this kind of validation makes the story more compelling as it resonates emotionally with struggles to which the reader can relate. Fantasy can be used in this way to enable an escape from the 'prison' of a reality without the possibility of problem-solving into a space where solutions can be figured within the imaginative.

The other form of validation is unique to magical realism, and is the representation of literal magical realities. As the significance of Mda's work shows, magical realism is an important element to consider when assessing the aesthetics of magical stories in the South African context. This is because magic in South African fantasies should not always be considered 'other' or as the signifier of a banished pre-modern worldview as is characteristic of marvellous fantasy. This does not mean that the magical in South African works should always be considered realist. As can also be seen in *The Heart of Redness*, not all fantastic elements in a story will necessarily have the same status, especially when there are conflicting ontologies at work in a single setting.

In *The Hidden Star*, the ability to speak to and understand the speech of animals possessed by all children does not appear to correspond, as Warnes (2009b:84) puts it, to anything found in 'religious or traditional belief systems' regarding children in the real world, and therefore cannot be magical realist in the faith-based mode. However there also appears to be no inclination towards 'parody, self-conscious critique and epistemological scepticism' in this feature either, and therefore it does not fall into the mould of irreverent magical realism as Warnes (2009b:74-75) characterises it. Therefore, the moment we discover that animals can talk in this world, and that it is part of a set of assumptions accepted by the children of that

world, the signal is that we are not in our world at all, but in a reimagining of that world by the author.

However, the appearance in *The Hidden Star* of witches who use their magical abilities to harm their communities in exchange for personal gain may be considered an aspect of the novel's realism and realist interpretations should apply. Adam Ashforth (2005:7) writes that in September 2000, the Portfolio Committee on Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology of the South African Parliament met with representatives of traditional healers' organizations who explained the distinction between 'traditional medicine' and 'witchcraft': 'Witches intentionally harm and kill people or cause harm or death to people. Healers heal by protecting people from harm and death through the spirit and ancestors.' In other words, the portrayal of traditional healing as a counter to dark witches in *The Hidden Star* should not be read entirely in terms of the metaphorical, but as a real world counter measure against the abuses of witches that actually affect South African communities.

That said, it does not follow that the magical represented in the realist mode is necessarily ineffectual in relation to any reader whose frame of belief does not corroborate the representation as realist. It also does not follow that the story succeeds aesthetically for a certain group of readers simply because of cultural background. As in any realist text, the status of all elements within the narrative, magical or otherwise, does not in itself determine whether the story resonates emotionally with readers. For similar and related reasons, it does not determine the reader's experience of a fictional place as pleasurable. Every text is a different aesthetic stew and each one needs to be considered on the basis of its individual merits.

In her article, entitled 'Conflicts and contradictions: Fantasy and realism in Sello Duiker's *The Hidden Star*', Judith Inggs (2011:93) argues that 'the contradictions and inconsistencies in this novel inevitably undermine its success'. Some of Inggs's arguments are structured by misconceptions about the way in which the fantasy aesthetic functions. For example, Inggs (2011:96) argues that 'Duiker's attempt to create a work of magical realism – as distinct from a pure fantasy in which the real and the fantastic take place in separate worlds – constitutes one of the novel's primary innovations and at the same time contributes to its contradictory nature.' As I have discussed at length in the previous chapter, a magical realist work is not one in which the real and the fantastic take place in the same world, as Inggs implies. Inggs is incorrect not only in her assumption that magical realism is a term to be used for any work in which the magical and realist combine, but also in her assertion that Duiker's novel is an innovation in this way. As indicated by Mendelsohn's *Rhetorical Strategies* (2008), fantasy narratives in which the fantastic erupts into the mundane world are so numerous as to constitute an entire subgenre, the intrusion fantasy, a form quite distinct from magical realism. The intrusion fantasy is a form in which the magical and realist intermingle as distinct categories, not one in which the magical is an aspect of realism. When we read a story about a talking wolf that appears in a recognisably realist setting rather than a fictional magical kingdom, the realist setting does not convince us that talking wolves exist.

Nevertheless, despite the misuse of some terminology, the critique by Inggs highlights many noteworthy dissonances in the novel, issues, I argue, that invite further analysis rather than dismissal. In terms of the potential for depictions of South African magical spaces I have been highlighting in this thesis, *The Hidden Star* is a novel of intriguing implications. When located within an understanding of fantasy and magical realism genre conventions, several points Inggs makes about the novel acquire a different and not invalid resonance. At the same

time, the misuse of genre specific vocabulary pertaining to fantasy and magical realism apparent in her paper is in itself revealing of the odd conceptual space inhabited by a work combining magical realist and fantastic aesthetics within a South African story for children.

One suggestive argument made by Inggs (2011:96) that I wish to consider in this chapter is encapsulated in her statement that while 'Duiker's work depicts the concrete reality of contemporary urban society and uses the fantastic and the supernatural in an attempt to present hope for an alternative to that reality…the primary world of the novel remains the real world'. By this Inggs means that the transcendent possibilities encoded within the fantastic aspects of the novel appear in no way to have any effect on the flawed world of reality. When Nolitye defeats her enemies within the underworld, and returns to a home setting freed of magical eruption, all returns to normal, the magic stone sinks into the earth and Nomakhosi herself vanishes, presumably not to be seen again. The last passage of the novel describes the return to a flawed, unchanged space that is nevertheless comforting in its familiarity: 'Suddenly in a rush to get home, they enter the hole…behind Sara and Mbali, and Tebogo and Vusi, who can't wait to see their families again, to enjoy a home-cooked meal. But most of all they can't wait to be in familiar surroundings again' (Duiker, 2006:232).

Inggs (2011:104) argues:

> The story begins as a confident and optimistic quest, the success of which will have the power to change the reality in which the protagonists live, to restore Nolitye's identity, and rescue her parents from the Underworld. But as the narrative continues, the reader becomes acutely aware that the enormity of the quest is itself a prediction of its failure. The ending, despite Nolitye being reunited with her family, reflects the unchanging reality of life for many South Africans, and ultimately there appears to be no hope of an alternative.

In order to unpack this argument, we need to locate the novel within a dominant strand of fantasy criticism, the defence against escapism. Defending fantasy from escapism, Tolkien ([1964] 2001:60-61) argues:

> In what the misusers of Escape are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic...Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using Escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing...the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter.

What Tolkien's argument above underlines is not only a function of marvellous fantasy, but its chief pleasure, namely the transcendence of a flawed, disappointing reality. There are significant implications in Tolkien's analogy with prisons. A prison, by Tolkien's definition, is not a place that can be improved, or made to be healing, but is a place that of necessity must be escaped. Taken in this way, the analogy between Real Life and prison is problematic, since this does seem to imply a fatalist attitude to life's problems and an endorsement of indulgent daydreaming. However, Tolkien is sceptical of the idea of 'Real Life' as defined in this way and suggests the world outside prison is *actually* real life, certainly not any 'less real because the prisoner cannot see it'.

Marvellous fantasy for Tolkien is imaginatively transcendent, allowing for a vision of what reality ought to be. 'Fantasy' observes Mendelsohn (2011:5), '…is less an argument with the universe than a sermon on the way things should be'. The question then becomes what remains in the fantasy narrative that is useful or applicable if extricated from the impossibilities of the fantastic. One possible answer is that the liberation of the imagination is in itself useful and applicable.

As Gaylard (2005:1) argues in the context of postcolonialism, '...to think of the truly postcolonial is an imaginative activity, for the human past, present and foreseeable future is dominated by nations, colonies and empires of all kinds'. Before change can be effected, a vision of an alternative to reality is needed, and that fantasy can provide. In addition, I have tried to show in my chapter on *The Heart of Redness* that various other rhetorical strategies and structural elements from the marvellous fantasy paradigm can be reconfigured in ways that subvert its characteristic anti-intellectualism and simplistic identity constructs. In this chapter I will consider how such elements have been used in *The Hidden Star* and to what effect. Specifically, I will be examining the way the novel frames wrongness, how it structures quest, and how it depicts and contrasts mythopoeic space and home space.

The Hidden Star opens with a decidedly negative depiction of its home space, the township Phola where Nolitye lives with her mother. It is not uncommon for portal-quest narratives to contrast the wrongness of contemporary reality with a fantasy-space that functions, as Mendelsohn puts it, as a 'sermon on the way things should be', but an uneasiness with fantasy as transcendent vision is suggested early on. The description of the 'harsh lights of tall street lamps' that 'wipe the soft shadows of the dwellings' suggests a setting resistant to imaginative exercises in fantasy in its evocation of the phrase 'harsh light of reality' (Duiker, 2006:3). The thin, unkempt dogs provide images of deprivation and hardship, while a 'police siren is ignored by the children who play hide and seek,' one assumes, because such sounds are a normal part of township life (Duiker, 2006:3).

Animals go on to play significant roles in the story and provide a particularly dreary commentary on what is normal in Nolitye's world. Additionally, when Nolitye establishes at the beginning of the novel that only 'children are supposed to hear animals talk', this has the

double effect of signalling childhood's affinity for magic whilst simultaneously delineating childhood as a world set apart in which feelings of powerlessness are shared by animals and children (Duiker, 2006:7). Nolitye reflects that Rex the dog, the leader of a local gang of wild strays, can be 'playful and likable' but is mostly as 'mean as a hungry hyena' as necessitated by a harsh life. Mandla the donkey complains of being overworked and underfed when he is reclaimed by his owner after he is defended from a vicious stray called Beastie (Duiker, 2006:109). The dog Mister, who possesses one of the stone fragments that Nolitye must collect 'looks vicious, barking fiercely and pulling on its chain' (Duiker, 2006:167). None of the township animals are associated with images of nurturing, comfort or safety, an important signifier of abuse in the space they occupy.

The moment in which Nolitye communicates the ability of children to understand animals without surprise is certainly not magical realist, as there is no traditional belief that corresponds with such a phenomenon. However, the lack of wonder characterising the first instance of magic in the book is a significant one for thematic reasons. Wonder is associated with the transcendent, healing aspects of fantasy aesthetics, and the talking animals of the townships are the source of neither. They are instead a narrative device that functions to emphasise wrongness, and so it is not surprising that the animals themselves later become the recipients of healing in the story when Nolitye uses magic to close Rex's wounds.

Strangely, it is only the abnormal that generates caution and alarm among the characters of the story, as we are told that the 'only worry' of the children is that they not 'stray too far from their homes, because of late their parents have become very strict about that' (Duiker, 2006:3). This introduces us to the mysterious and frightening Zim, a creature we learn is

responsible for stealing children and taking them to the underworld. However, it is significant that the Zim is hardly the only frightening aspect of Nolitye's world. 'Nolitye,' we are told,

> …doesn't like thinking about the Zim and tries to put him out of her mind. But there are other things too that make her fear the dark—strange noises like an owl hooting on a rooftop. Or gunshots that startle you from sleep, or people who suddenly start screaming, or a car screeching down the road as if speeding away from someone or something—maybe from MaMtonga next door (Duiker, 2006:13).

In the harsh world of Duiker's South Africa, the normal world of childhood fears is clearly exacerbated by the realities of township life.

It is within this troubled context that the optimistic possibilities signified in the magical manifest in the story when we are told about an 'irresistible urge' that overcomes Nolitye so that she is compelled to go outside (Duiker, 2006:5). It is at this moment that Nolitye discovers the first piece of the magical stone. While it is unclear what draws Nolitye outside, there is the suggestion of a positive, magical force driving the momentum of the plot at this moment as it is revealed Nolitye has a mysterious habit of collecting stones that ties her to her name. Her mother tells her, 'Is it that stupid name your granny gave you that makes you do it? "Keeper of the Stone", "Keeper of Knowledge"—where have you ever heard of such a name? I wonder who put it in her head' (Duiker, 2006:5). Nolitye replies, 'The stones are not silly, Mama. And my name is not stupid. Gogo said: you mess with a woman, you mess with a stone' (Duiker, 2006:6).

The symbolism of the stone in this way overlaps meanings of knowledge with a source of empowerment linked specifically to women. Molly Brown (2008b:166) points out that this moment in the novel quite 'deliberately invokes' a 'powerful image of resistance' in the form of 'memories of the great women's march against the extension of the pass laws in 1956. As the women marched together to the Union Buildings, they sang a traditional song *Wathint'*

abafazi; wathint' imbokodo [You strike the women; you strike the rock].' However, the theme of female empowerment will go on to be threaded jaggedly through the narrative and the episode encapsulates the kind of dissonance that characterises the work as a whole. With regard to many messages signalled in *The Hidden Star*, Duiker tends to have either the narrator or a character state the message explicitly, but at times seems to undercut the message through his story-telling. I will expand on this issue of female empowerment further on, but first wish to focus on Duiker's use of the magical, not as realism, but as representative of the imaginative.

Shortly after the discovery of the first stone fragment, we are told that Nolitye 'kisses the stone and wishes that her father were here…She closes her eyes and makes the wish. When she opens them, she feels better' (Duiker, 2006:11-12). In this example, Nolitye shows some capacity to use her imagination to transcend hardship, drawing for strength on the stone, which functions here as a symbol for the transcendent qualities of the imagination. It has been noted that children's 'capacity for imagination, prominently championed by the Romantics, has become so essential to the idea of the child that it is now implicit in the socially accepted definition of childhood itself' (Cecire et el, 2015:1). Duiker seems to share this idea of the child as more imaginatively unfettered than adults, but balances this capacity for the positive imaginary precariously against its negative opposite, the lively nightmare world of childhood fears.

We are told: 'Nolitye is scared of the dark. She is afraid of the creatures that lurk in the night, like the Zim who they say is the one who's stealing the neighbourhood kids' (Duiker, 2006:13). The childhood world of fears and chaos is the reverse side of the positive imaginary that generates faith and wish-making. This would be a significant strength of the

narrative if the significations of the magical engaged more clearly as a weapon against their dark counterparts. We are told, for example, that to Nolitye, 'each stone is like a memory. It helps her make sense of the big grown-up world' (Duiker, 2006:12). The stone as symbol of empowerment is extended here as a mechanism for negotiating adult meanings and links to its primary signification of knowledge. However, it is unclear how the stone enables Nolitye to make sense of the adult world and the novel also provides no clear picture as to what about the adult world Nolitye finds intimidating or confusing. The theme of female empowerment is another example of this kind of dissonance between the opposing forces of wrongness on the one hand, and the magical power to overcome wrongness on the other.

As noted, Nolitye's name 'Keeper of the Stone, Keeper of Knowledge' overlaps significations of knowledge with female strength when Nolitye defends her name with the adage handed down from her grandmother, 'you mess with a woman, you mess with a stone'. Inggs (2011:100) remarks that:

> Despite the portrayal of women as stronger and more solid than men, and the implication that Duiker may have been seeking to counteract certain stereotypical attitudes, this is contradicted in several sexist comments and actions elsewhere in the narrative. These examples may appear to be minor, but they are significant exactly because they are presented as the norm, with no attempt by Duiker to foreground them or to prompt his reader to question them.

The examples of sexist comments that Inggs (2011:100) provides includes the narrator's remark that 'only girls' fingers are nimble enough and their hand movements quick enough to play [ngeto]' and where 'the reader learns that "boys can learn woodwork, while girls are taught how to sew and do beading and needlework"'. These examples sum up an objection to ascribing essential natures to boys and girls, linked to traditional roles. This gender essentialism is encapsulated in the scene wherein Nolitye is told the boys cannot hear the Stone speak because boys and 'men are like water. They go everywhere and anywhere

because that is their spirit' (Duiker, 2006:55). The broad generalisations established here (i.e. the suggestion that boys have less of an affinity for stone because of a lack of resilience and strength) are not really supported by the narrative. Nolitye's male friends, even Bheki who is often the most frightened of the trio, prove determined and supportive allies to Nolitye up to the end of her quest. Other contradictions embedded in the story further lessen the emotional impact of the novel's message about female strength and resilience.

Firstly, the stone calls itself the spirit of Women's Strength but it is unclear how this connects with its much clearer signification of traditional knowledge, which Nolitye inherits from the men in her family. Overcome by the obstacles she faces and the heavy burden she carries, Nolitye is told about her father's descent from a long line of healers, all male: 'You know, he came from a long line of traditional healers. His father, his grandfather, his brothers, even he himself, were healers' (Duiker, 2006:112). Nolitye's chosen one status seems linked to her affinity for stones and resilience, but this is at odds with her male-ancestor healer heritage, since men 'are like water'. Nolitye is told how an all-female mystic organisation called The Sisters of Light protected the stone in ancient times but they never make an actual appearance to assist Nolitye and are not mentioned again. In addition, all of Nolitye's most immediate antagonists, Sylvia, MaMtonga and the school bully Rotten Nellie, are female. Nellie later emerges as an ally and unexpectedly aids Nolitye by voluntarily giving her one of the stone fragments. However, Nellie does so only by defying the source of her own corruption, another woman, Nellie's mother, who is revealed to be in league with the witches in exchange for wealth. Additionally, all of Nolitye's most useful allies are male, such as her friends Bheki and Four Eyes, and the local drunk Ntate Mathews. Aside from Nomakhosi, Nolitye has no important relationships with women. When Nolitye's real mother is revealed, she is largely silent and completely dependent on Nolitye. However, while Nomakhosi is the

only positive and consistently present female role model in the story, her centrality does make her an important one.

Powerful and wise, Nomakhosi guides Nolitye through her quest and protects Nolitye from harm when she can. Molly Brown (2008b:169) notes that Nomakhosi is 'an affirming adult role model…not worn down by poverty like Thembi, consumed by ambition and malevolence like the sorceress MaMtonga or denatured by her collusion with an imposed education system like Nolitye's teacher, the aptly named Moeder.' From this perspective, the challenges faced specifically by women and girls appear to be addressed in the novel in the form of what Brown identifies as a 'range of deceptive maternal role models' that contrast with both Nomakhosi and Nolitye (Brown, 2008b:169). If the negative mother figures are broadened out to encompass negative images of femaleness, Rotten Nellie is included in the category.

Brown (2008b:166) points out that Nellie, who imposes her will upon those smaller than her through violence, dresses like a boy and vehemently protests when Nolitye refers to her as a lady, has 'achieved her dominant position within the school hierarchy by denying her own femininity and modelling her actions on those more usually associated with the successful male.' Nolitye provides readers with an 'alternative model of power relations whereby love and concern displace exploitation and coercive violence' (Brown, 2008b:167). However, the encoding of negative images of femaleness within the wrongness of the novel's world shares with the theme of tribal disunity a certain lack of emotional urgency. Negative images of femaleness do not distress Nolitye on a personal, emotional level. Nolitye never overtly reflects or feels that the challenges she faces are related in any way to gender nor does she

come to any kind of epiphany that the positive affirming femininity embodied by Nomakhosi is essential to correcting the wrongness afflicting her community.

As it happens, positive female strength does appear to be the crucial factor in banishing the sources of evil in the story in a way that further muddies the waters around the depiction of gendered categories like women's strength vis-à-vis boy and girl characters. The dissonance relating to the theme of female empowerment would not be so striking if it did not emerge as essential to the climactic confrontation scene. Here the boys are included among the children (led by Nolitye) who simply repeat the phrase 'you mess with a woman, you mess with a stone' and doing so, finally banish both Ncitjana and MaMtonga. Can the spirit of women's strength then be invoked by any child, regardless of gender? How does the spirit of women's strength engage specifically with those who have used traditional knowledge to harm others? There are no positive female traditional healers in the story; Nomakhosi certainly is not one. This kind of dissonance at the level of meaning has the effect of emptying the magical, and the story as a whole, of its significance and emotional resonance. It also renders the quest, which shapes the story, as strangely free-floating. Consequently, place, with which quest narratives are traditionally intimately involved, is muted under an overlay of meanings that are largely disengaged from spatial significance.

Mendelsohn (2008:4) argues that the object of the quest in the portal-quest structure is merely a metaphor for the real reward, usually 'moral growth and/or admission into the kingdom, or redemption'. The quest in *The Hidden Star*, however, is situated rather differently within the mesh of the novel's thematic concerns. There is firstly a lack of consistency within the literal playing out of Nolitye's quest. While Nolitye is instructed to complete the stone in order to unite the warring tribes, there is no real evidence of discord in Nolitye's community. If

anything, the novel highlights how the people of Phola draw together when they are threatened, as shown in the episode in which a fire ravages the township: ‘a line of men work efficiently, passing buckets of water between them. Children operate the six public taps, while some women are scurrying away from the fire with odd bits of furniture and other possessions (Duiker, 2006:134). Even Rotten Nellie, the bully and secondary antagonist of the novel, is shown instinctively to value being part of a community when she voluntarily gives one of the stone pieces to Nolitye. Realising Nolitye will rescue the stolen children, Nellie tells Nolitye that she does not ‘want to be the only one left behind’ (Duiker, 2006:179). Ncitjana and the witches represent individual inclinations to harm the community for the purposes of self-interest; their abuses do not rise to the level of inter-tribal conflict.

When Nolitye restores the united stone, the spirit of the stone declares that ‘the tribes shall once more gather and live in peace’ (Duiker, 2006:231). However, as a consequence of the absence of any clear representation of tribal disunity, the literal objective of the quest structure is achieved at a strangely abstract level that is remote from the urgency of what is actually wrong in Nolitye’s world. However, the quest as a metaphor for ‘moral growth’ or ‘admission to the kingdom’ appears not quite to fit with the novel’s concerns either.

In the course of her quest, Nolitye does not obtain moral growth so much as demonstrate moral purity. Early on, Nolitye is told that the special destiny to unite the stone has been conferred upon her because she is a child and is ‘pure and innocent’ (Duiker, 2006:99). Nolitye’s innocence and purity are evident in her complete lack of a character arc; she does not change because she has no need of change. Nolitye has no character flaws; she is compassionate, responsible, and intelligent, loves doing her homework and is respectful to elders. Accordingly, the various challenges that structure Nolitye’s quest showcase her

inherent virtue or resourcefulness rather than result in growth, or else suggest her complete dependence on magical aids. In her first challenge, Nolitye must wrest the first piece of the magic stone from a witch who has stolen it and when Nolitye is attacked, the battle is fought entirely on her behalf by Nomakhosi. To win the next piece of the stone, Monna, the guardian of the second stone fragment, requires Nolitye to locate where he has hidden the stone so that she can prove herself reliable. Nolitye finds the second piece simply through the magic of the stone fragments she already possesses, which causes the earth to boil where the second piece is buried. Nolitye passes other tests by showing her inherent kindness, such as removing a thorn from the paw of the third stone guardian, the dog Mister, or licking the wounds of the River-spirit Queen Noka, who reveals herself and offers guidance as a reward. Rather than moral growth, what Nolitye lacks and obtains in her quest is a connection with her people's reserve of magical knowledge eroded by oppression and a restrictive version of modernity.

This kind of protagonist is neither unique to *The Hidden Star* nor in itself a weakness. Mendlesohn (2008:5) notes of the protagonist Dorothy in the American fantasy, *The Wizard of Oz* that 'Dorothy's journeys do not result in her own moral growth—she herself is a representation of a new morality—but in the moral growth of those she influences. She is *grace*…' The same can be said of the unfailingly virtuous Lucy in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who functions as a corrective antithesis to her brother, the corruptible Edmund. However, it is unclear whether Nolitye influences anyone around her. There are two characters in the novel who do show growth, Nellie and Four Eyes. Nellie and Four Eyes originally form part of the group that bullies Nolitye, the Spoilers, and both assist Nolitye in the end. However, while the story does not contradict the possibility that Nolitye has influenced these characters, there is no overt representation of it.

However, Nolitye's role as grace, or representation of a new morality may be considered differently within the context of the novel's project regarding traditional knowledge. Early in the novel, Nolitye experiences a vision whilst holding the magic stone:

> She was standing at the bottom of a valley and could hear a river babbling nearby. She clearly saw a large egg, much, much bigger than an ostrich egg, even bigger than Mamani's mbawula. At the same time she saw a tall baobab tree with strange root-like branches reaching into the sky (Duiker, 2006:47).

Nolitye, being severed somewhat from her roots, needs help deciphering the meanings of her vision rooted within indigenous magic, and in her quest she obtains the ability to do so. The stone articulates Nolitye's unique significance when it declares: 'I've been silent all these years, waiting for someone to awaken my spirit. My spirit could only be awakened by someone who truly wants to see, like you. I know how hard things are for you' (Duiker, 2006:55). Nolitye's power as a visionary is encoded as the ability to see the invisible, and into the truth of the reality she inhabits, though the substance of this is not made clear. Although Nolitye's search for stones metaphorically suggests a search for knowledge, she does not show any unique insight into the origin of the wrongness affecting her community. Rather, Nolitye's search for stones might symbolise an instinctual insight that another kind of knowledge is needed by her community, traditional knowledge.

The evil forces in the story threaten community by stealing children, and in Nolitye's case, parents, ripping at the family unit. Ncitjana is the source of such evil, and he desires power because he is the descendent of a tribe that knowledge did not reach in time. To the extent that Ncitjana represents a negative version of Nolitye herself, he battles with her over the correct use of traditional knowledge. Ncitjana wants the stone to make himself powerful, and is willing to harm the community of tribes by doing so. At the end of the novel, the stone declares that Ncitjana and MaMtonga 'have stolen from the land and never given anything

back' (Duiker, 2006:228). Though the significations of land are not explained and land does not appear anywhere else in the narrative as a loaded term, land in this instance is most likely meant as a metaphor for community. The evil forces in the story are closely associated with the imagery of death, decay and darkness, situated in space. MaMtonga's house smells 'as if something is rotting somewhere in the dark' (Duiker, 2006:79). The dwelling of the Zim has a nauseating smell and is littered with bones, and Ncitjana's reign of the underworld is marked by an elephant graveyard that vanishes only after Nolitye's triumph. The willingness to use traditional knowledge to inflict harm on the community for personal gain appears to be the primary source of wrongness in the story.

In contrast with Ncitjana, Nolitye is counselled to use magical knowledge in the service of healing, and does so in various episodes. Her healing of Rex, the guardian dog Mister, and Noka are examples of the healing made possible by traditional knowledge in the hands of someone with pure intent. Additionally, Nolitye is associated with the imagery of renewal and birth, particularly during her sojourn in the underworld where the mythic comes into focus as an order of determining meanings. Towards the end of her quest, Nolitye is told that she must speak to Noka, Queen of the river spirits, to free her mother. Nolitye gains passage into the realm of the river spirits and sinks down into the river where she finds that she can breathe underwater and that when she finally alights at the mouth of a cave beneath the water, her clothes are dry. Here Nolitye is approached by an ugly woman who requests that Nolitye prove her compassion by licking the old woman's wounds. When Nolitye does so without hesitation, the woman reveals herself as the Queen of the River Spirits who shows herself only to deserving souls. Nolitye has passed a test proving she has a 'compassionate heart' and may ask a reward (Duiker, 2006:208).

Noka then tells Nolitye that Ncitjana has turned Nolitye's father into a baobab tree near an elephant graveyard and offered Thembi, Nolitye' s mother, to Kwena, the crocodile, in exchange for power over the Zim. Nolitye learns that the only way to rescue someone from the River Spirit world is by answering a riddle, but if she answers incorrectly she may never leave. The theme of Kwena's riddle reflects the conflict of the story in the simplest form: light vs darkness or good and evil. Nolitye is asked what is everywhere around her and can hide in a pea, and can only be destroyed by light. Nolitye 'thinks about her real mother alone in the dark somewhere. A warm feeling of love comes over her as she sees the answer clearly' (Duiker, 2006:209). Kwena then unearths a large egg and gives it to Nolitye and Nolitye recognises the egg from her vision at the beginning of the story.

The image of Thembi curled up in the egg like 'an unborn baby' oddly infantilizes Nolitye's mother and positions Nolitye as an anxious, expectant parent. The role reversal functions as a sad commentary on the necessity for Nolitye having to take on the roles of protector and rescuer while so young, but suggests her inherent status rather than growth. In a continuation of role reversal, the phrasing here couples themes of infancy with freedom, a still-loaded term in the early 21st century South African context. After an emotional reunion, 'Thembi disentangles herself from Nolitye and takes her by the hand. "You lead, I'll follow". "You have a wonderful child," Noka says to Thembi. Taking her first careful steps of freedom, Thembi proudly says, "Thank you"' (Duiker, 2006:211). Nolitye's role as a leader and herald of a restoration whereby traditional knowledge can resume its rightful place is highly suggestive in this scene. Nolitye is here told about the Healer of the Road which can lead her home once she has rescued both her parents, and the centrality of traditional knowledge is underlined in Noka's lament that 'there are places where children grow up without knowledge of the Healer of the Road'. Noka's reassurance that it is all the better for Nolitye

that she has ‘learned something new’ and that the ‘road holds many lessons’ further underlines that Nolitye’s journey is one to recover traditional knowledge (Duiker, 2006:212).

The symbolism of water, and by extension the world of the River Spirits, is suggested in the description of the river as Nolitye leads her mother out of the watery realm: ‘It is dark and murky, as if it holds many secrets’ (Duiker, 2006:212). The secrets here are the mysteries of a lost heritage into which Nolitye is initiated. There are suggestions that Nolitye is a prophetess-figure or goddess-mother for the new South Africa, a healer of historical hurts, specifically those that mark negation of the value of traditional knowledge. Nolitye overseeing the birth of her own mother suggests that she metaphorically facilitates the rebirth of South Africa, the old emerging as newly formed under the guidance of the mythically charged youth. Noka doubles the imagery of rebirth and regeneration in her transformation from an old woman into a beautiful queen, and herself presides over the rebirth of Nolitye’s mother. However, the arc of growth suggested in these scenes is undermined in Nolitye’s reunion with her father, Xoli.

The Spirit of the Stone tells Nolitye that to reverse her father’s transformation into a baobab tree, she must smear the trunk of the tree with mud from the stream. The children help and after Xoli transforms, ‘Nolitye leaps into his arms even though she is not a little girl any more’ (Duiker, 2006:230). The description here reverses the imagery earlier which infantilised Thembi and positioned Nolitye as mother, and rather impresses Nolitye’s right as a child to safeguarding and protection. This overwrites the mythic interplay that positioned Nolitye as a mystical mother figure with Nolitye’s personal quest for a protected childhood, with which the mythic arc is fundamentally at odds.

Finally, in addition to having no need of moral growth, Nolitye also has no interest in 'admission to the kingdom', as Mendelsohn terms the significance of entry into the destinies of fantasy kingdoms in portal-quest narratives. While such a space is introduced in the closing chapters of *The Hidden Star*, Nolitye desires nothing more than to return home with her parents even after the evil has been banished from the underworld. As is shown in the quoted passages above, the first thing that we are told Nolitye cares about is the absence of her father. The restoration of the stone thus stands symbolically for an objective that is underlined far more strongly than the healing of community discord, namely the restoration of home.

This brings me to the most important aspect in which *The Hidden Star* differs from *King Solomon's Mines* and *The Heart of Redness*: Duiker's novel does not ascribe the importance of the significations of either identity or transcendent vision to a mythopoeic setting that the other two novels do. Themes of identity and the imaginative vision of ideals certainly exist in the novel, but are simply not incorporated within the orbit of Nolitye's emotional concerns. This is one of the main sources of dissonance in the novel and has the effect of emptying the signifiers of transcendence or hope in the mythic space of some of their weight or resonance.

In my chapter on *The Heart of Redness*, I have argued that Mda's insistence on the historical and geographical reality of its magical setting Qolorha acts as an implicit rejection of Haggard's demarcation of Kukuanaland as irrelevant to history. Situated in real space and time, the wonder of Qolorha, unlike Kukuanaland, reinvigorates the commitment to the national project by enabling both healing and constructive energy. In *The Hidden Star*, however, Duiker similarly demarcates a magical space as outside history, and Nolitye, unlike both Camagu and the white protagonists of *King Solomon's Mines*, returns to her home

seemingly unaltered by her experiences there. It is true that during her quest, Nolitye obtains and learns the value of traditional knowledge, but there is no indication of the role such knowledge will play upon return to Nolitye's township. The healing and optimistic trajectory associated with the interplay between transcendent vision and realist disenchantment in the marvellous fantasy is, as a consequence, strangely frustrated in this novel, and the depiction of space is accordingly affected. Despite the trappings of quest and mythopoeic setting, Duiker's fantasy is not concerned with the ideals embodied in a national place, mythical or realist. The novel is instead far more emotionally invested in the restoration of the intimate, personal home space as symbolic of protected childhood in which wrongness can be managed rather than defeated.

Butler (2006:104) notes that in Western societies 'the quest motif is not confined to children's literature but it might seem to have a particular propriety there, the act of "leaving home" being so closely tied…to the end of childhood itself'. Butler (2006:101) also observes that home

> as a primary focus of identity, is a concept that exhibits…paradoxical qualities…and nowhere more clearly than in fantasy literature. In the quest monomyth on which so much fantasy depends, home is both the setting-out point and the point of return, initially offering itself as a point of stability…Ironically, these very connotations of stability and security work against the quest narrative itself, by running counter to its emphasis on the importance of risk and life-changing experience. If home were adequate in itself, why would one ever leave? On the other hand, if it has been irrevocably 'outgrown' or found wanting, why would one return? These two movements are in constant tension.

If such a characteristically 'Western' tension exists in *The Hidden Star*, the novel appears to go some way towards its neutralisation. It does so primarily through the lack of transformation undergone by its protagonist, Nolitye, so that the intervention of time which usually 'means that the returning hero is not the same person as the raw innocent who set out'

is inconsequential. Secondly, the novel instantiates the home space as one affected by two categories of wrongness, the normal and the magical, of which only the magical is marked as transgressive. This means that once Nolitye has defeated the supernatural agents of evil in her community, the mundane sources of wrongness in Nolitye's home, such as poverty, are accepted within the novel's comforting restoration of familiarity. Another effect is that the ideals associated with the mythopoeic space are sundered from the relevance of mundane life, a fate the mythopoeic underworld shares with Kukuanaland, though there are important differences from Haggard's novel, as I will discuss further on.

In an unusual reversal of the coming of age story, Nolitye's is a quest for childhood, not growth, an objective underlined in the novel's prioritisation of restoring home with all its flaws as opposed to the revitalisation of the mythic underworld. It is the novel's positioning of home, and Nolitye's interaction with the spaces of township and underworld, that deflate the meanings of rebirth that underpin the mythic underworld. This has significant implications for wonder and the depiction of magical space.

In *The Hidden Star*, there are many similarities with patterns found in marvellous fantasy for children, but Duiker somewhat deviates from Mendelsohn's (2008) categories of narrative structures. It is important to examine how this is done at some length because, as I have attempted to show, Mendelsohn's categories can be useful tools for investigating enchantment and otherness in fantasy.

Although the trajectory of movement in *The Hidden Star* is structured by a quest, as I noted previously, and Nolitye does pass through a portal into a mythopoeic realm, the novel deviates from Mendelsohn's description of the portal-quest structure in significant ways.

Firstly, the moment of entry does not occur until the climactic battle at the end of the story. This means that the experience of place in the novel is dominated by the space outside the portal, the township Phola, which in the archetypical portal-quest fantasy functions as little more than a framing device. In both *King Solomon's Mines* and *The Heart of Redness*, the portal quest structure is appropriated in more or less its traditional form, and the effect of the structure in those novels is to direct attention to the magical which encodes possibilities for transcending wrongness in various forms. In contrast, while *The Hidden Star* is likewise decidedly negative in its depiction of the space that frames its portal, it also forces the reader to spend more than half the novel in that space. Considering Mendlesohn's (2008:xx) argument that the portal-quest structure is 'about entry, transition, and negotiation', the portal-quest pattern only characterises the last four chapters of the book, signified in the title of the last of which is entitled 'The Journey.'

Secondly, Mendlesohn (2008:xix) is emphatic in her insistence that the fantastic in the portal quest fantasy 'is *on the other side* and does not "leak". Although individuals may cross both ways,' Mendlesohn continues, 'the magic does not'. In *The Hidden Star*, not only does magic 'leak' through the portal to the underworld in the form of Ncitjana and the Zim, but magic appears to have numerous sources other than the underworld. Nolitye's guide Nomakhosi, for example, a green-eyed, pointy-eared spirit with the ability to freeze time and defend Nolitye with magic, comes from the realm of the ancestors, a space entirely independent of the underworld. This deviation from the portal quest structure makes it necessary to examine the way the fantastic affects place because, as Mendelsohn points out, wonder is facilitated by the portal quest's trajectory of discovery.

In terms of the rhetorical strategies used in *The Hidden Star*, the novel appears to closely resemble Mendlesohn's (2008:xxi) description of the intrusion fantasy, in which the 'fantastic is the bringer of chaos…the beast in the bottom of the garden, or the elf seeking assistance.' Many fantastic elements in the story are sources of horror and disruption, predominantly evil agents stealing children in the service of Ncitjana. The dominant atmosphere and structure of the book certainly seems to fit with Mendlesohn's description of the intrusion fantasy wherein the fantastic

> is horror and amazement. It takes us out of safety without taking us from our place. It is recursive. The intrusion fantasy is not necessarily unpleasant, but it has as its base the assumption that normality is organized, and that when the fantastic retreats the world, while not necessarily unchanged, returns to predictability (Mendelsohn, 2008:xxii).

When the first half of *The Hidden Star* is considered in terms of the conventions of the intrusion fantasy, the novel's depiction of space can be understood in new ways. Crucially, the intrusion fantasy as Mendlesohn describes it is not characterised by wonder, but by 'horror and amazement'. Mendlesohn (2008:142) goes on to observe that 'while much of modern horror fits in the very centre of the intrusion fantasy subset, horror is not ipso facto intrusion fantasy' yet argues that much 'modern horror…—particularly of the supernatural sort—is quintessential intrusion fantasy.'

In contrast, horrors experienced in portal-quest fantasies are situated differently because of how their connection with wonder-infused place is carefully structured. To illustrate the difference in effect, a comparison can be made between Duiker's novel and Mendlesohn's choice of a classic portal-quest fantasy, Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In Lewis's children's story, fearsome beings such as evil, sentient wolves and ogres emphasise the wrongness that must be banished from a land, Narnia, in order to effect restoration to an original status. These horrifying elements are marked by their foreignness to the desirable

space. However, in Duiker's novel, Nolitye is told about an ideal order of existence in which the tribes were meant to unite and prosper, but has no cause to care about restoring this order for personal reasons, since Nolitye's community does not suffer from disunity and there is no experience of wonder that draws Nolitye to the underworld. The result is that Nolitye's experience of horror in the course of her quest is offset only by the desire to return to her parents, not the desire for a magical place.

That the intrusion fantasy lends itself to horror conventions is evident in the bulk of the story that makes up *The Hidden Star*. Mendelsohn (2008:117) notes that authors of intrusion fantasies 'expend a great deal of energy…in creating the sense of the setting as "spooky," places that harbour the latent…[The] intrusion fantasy requires faith in the sub-surface, the sense that there is always something lurking.' This can be seen in the opening passages of *The Hidden Star* wherein mentions of the monstrous Zim are laced through the narrative as episodes of tension and fear that culminate in Nolitye's confrontation with the monster in the underworld. In the first chapter we are told that the children fear straying too far from their homes without being told why; a few pages later Nolitye's fear of the dark is explained as a fear 'of creatures that lurk in the night, like the Zim who they say is the one who's stealing the neighbourhood kids' (Duiker, 2006:13). The same chapter concludes with Nolitye's run-in with the unpleasant MaMtonga, who Nolitye fears because of rumours that MaMtonga is a witch. Mendelsohn (2008:116) characterises the latency of the intrusion fantasy as 'the withholding, not of information, but of visuals and events. Many horrors,' she notes, 'take place offstage, or are first represented onstage with hints and warnings…' Nolitye reflects that MaMtonga is rumoured to make potions for people that kill enemies, 'or can put someone under a spell. And [that she] has a snake in her shack…But Nolitye has never seen it. She is too scared of MaMtonga to go near enough to have a peep' (Duiker, 2006:14).

It is true that lurking horrors in *The Hidden Star* are counterbalanced by the positive forces in the story that have entered from another place. Also, the positive examples of magic have an effect on Nolitye that suggests wonder. However, these effects are undermined because of the way they are situated. When the Spirit of the Stone speaks to Nolitye for the first time, 'Nolitye becomes so frightened that she drops the stone' but quickly gets over her fear, speaking back to the stone: 'I'm listening, Spirit of the Stone' (Duiker, 2006:54-55). When Nolitye is made aware of the power of the stone, her skin tingles and a comparison is made with her excitement over receiving new shoes that emphasises the potency and otherness of the magical:

> …the excitement she feels now is different. For a reason she cannot understand or explain, she has been chosen to look after the stone. A magic stone. She feels shaky if she thinks what powers the stone might have besides making them giggle in the face of danger and producing fatcakes… (Duiker, 2006:59-60).

Nolitye's excitement over something she cannot express in language combined with the leap from fear of the unknown to a coherent order of meaning suggests the sublime aesthetic. Similarly, when Nolitye meets Nomakhosi, an ancestral spirit from the land beyond death, time slows and Nomakhosi's singing induces a relaxed feeling to counter Nolitye's heightened excitement at the unknown. A 'dreamy numbness settles on her eyes' and Nolitye speaks to her with 'delight and fear mingling in her voice' (Duiker, 2006:93). However, because these instances of the magical occur within the frame space, Nolitye's experience of wonder is disengaged from her experience of place, as I explain below.

In contrast with the experience of magic in the portal-quest fantasy, which accompanies a trajectory of discovery and a navigation of place, magic occurs for Nolitye in a space with which she is familiar and uninterested. There is no moment where Nolitye sees her community church or the dusty streets of Phola in a new light, as a place of ancient magics

and hidden beauty. As a result, Recovery does not take place for Nolitye; ordinary experiences are not made luminous with wonder due to proximity with the magical.

In contrast, the figuration of a mythopoeic order of meanings as spatial manifests as a parallel universe that highlights the wrongness of contemporary South African life as Nolitye experiences it. The first glimpse of this is afforded in Nolitye's vision, wherein the parallel universe, like Kukuanaland, is beautiful, sheltered (imagined as a valley) and mysterious.

> She doesn't tell Bheki about the strange feeling that came over her the split second the light blinded her. It was like being pulled somewhere, and a picture flashed into her mind. She was standing at the bottom of a valley and could hear a river babbling nearby. She clearly saw a large egg, much, much bigger than an ostrich egg, even bigger than Mamani's mbawula. At the same time she saw a tall baobab tree with strange root-like branches reaching into the sky (Duiker, 2006:47).

The egg, greenery and water in Nolitye's vision suggest bounty. The suggestion of strangeness indicates excess at the level of sign, which in the fantastic sublime signifies meaning beyond language. But Nolitye's experience does not resonate as sublime because she is not overwhelmed. Nolitye experiences a confrontation of the mind 'with something new, something certainly not "habitual,"' (Sandner, 2011:26). However, reality does not destabilise for Nolitye because of the overlay of the episode with the trappings of dream. Bheki asks if she is okay and Nolitye assures him she is fine, 'blinking her eyes like someone waking from a dream' (Duiker, 2006:48).

Elsewhere Nolitye's dreams embody her capacity for hope and imaginative transcendence, as when we are told that 'Nolitye hates mornings because they tear her away from her dreams in which all sorts of wonderful things happen: sometimes she flies around, other times she plays hopscotch all day with her best friend Bheki' (Duiker, 2006:15). Nolitye's dreams bear a close resemblance to her wish-making and are linked through her imaginative life of a

childhood free from fears and cares, characterised by safety, love, friendship and play. But it is noteworthy that Nolitye does not dream of an idyllic African space, but of a carefree childhood later linked solely to the reunion with her parents. In contrast, Nolitye's vision, also coded as dream, is charged with spatial significance.

The examples described above underline the crucial difference between Nolitye's personal desires and her role within a mythic order of meanings figured as spatial. Nolitye's dreams of her imagined childhood are derailed into prophetic nightmares in which Nolitye is 'being chased by a man with no face who wants a stone', nightmares that are too real to be pushed out of her thoughts' (Duiker, 2006:16). Whereas dream as a narrative device can be used to combine Nolitye's imaginative capacity for hope with access to a mythic order of knowledge, Nolitye's dreams (her personal desires) are distinct from her visions of a mythic place. This later extends into the way Nolitye herself is disengaged from both the experience of place in the mythopoeic underworld into which she descends and its transcendent possibilities.

After defeating Sylvia, Nolitye embarks on her journey into the underworld in order to rescue her parents at which point the portal-quest structure begins to belatedly shape the narrative, albeit in a very ambiguous way. The portal-quest fantasy is traditionally characterised by wonder; to facilitate this, it is structured by 'entry, transition, and negotiation' wherein

> …the protagonist goes from a mundane life—in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist)—into direct contact with the fantastic; through which she transitions, to the point of negotiation with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm (Mendelsohn, 2008:xix).

Nolitye, however, has already been in contact with the fantastic in both its benign and malevolent forms, and we see the anxiety characteristic of the intrusion fantasy extending uneasily into the entry stage. Such anxiety is heightened by the fact that entry marks the

boundary beyond which the positive magical force of Nomakhosi can no longer assist Nolitye. The entry of the portal is also, significantly, a descent, with all its mythic connotations of trial and unease. Stiebel (2001:46) observes of the imperial romance that:

> The romantic hero moves within what Frye…calls a 'mental landscape' arranged in a vertical perspective on four levels: at top is heaven below that Eden or earthly paradise, then the world of earthly experience and, at the lowest level, hell or the demonic world, usually below ground. The two levels above that of earthly experience represent an 'idyllic world,' which is associated with happiness, peace, and sunshine; whereas below that of earthly experience is termed the 'demonic or night world' characterised by 'exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation and the threat of more pain'.

It is thus not surprising that structurally, entry into the portal for the children resembles the descent into the mines where death presides in *King Solomon's Mines*, activating nightmares: 'To see nothing while crawling down an endless, narrow, musty tunnel plays havoc with the imagination, and Bheki begins to believe he sees a big snake just beyond the small spot of torchlight' (Duiker, 2006:189). Significantly missing is the sense of serenity, reward, and wonder that characterises arrival in the magical space for both Camagu and the adventurers in Haggard's romance. Despite the children's unexpected discovery that the underworld is a place of light and fresh air which blinds and overwhelms them, they are dizzy 'with exhaustion and anxiety [as] they straighten up to survey the scene' (Duiker, 2006:189). What follows is a version of the 'bird's eye' view of landscape familiar from the imperial romance replete with subversions and mixed meanings:

> It is morning in a remote, boulder-strewn valley. A river gurgles nearby. Bheki dusts off his knees and Four Eyes blinks his eyes against the glare. It is so quiet that the distant cry of a fish eagle can be heard…They look around silently, in awe of the valley's beauty (Duiker, 2006:190).

Duiker's depiction of the underworld reflects his positioning of traditional knowledge, which is both lost to time and atemporal. The underworld in its ideological implications is strikingly similar to one of Haggard's epic panoramas, its protected stretches of wilderness suggestive

of a primeval, pre-human age. While *The Heart of Redness* casts knowledge, specifically as it relates to redness or what it means to be African, as debate, *The Hidden Star* suggests 'traditional' knowledge is indisputable and must simply be discovered and restored. The problematic simplicity of this position is compounded by Duiker's suggestion that such knowledge is in some sense hereditary and instinctive. While in the library, a mysterious book falls on Nolitye that 'is old and dusty with a grey jacket' (Duiker, 2006:129). The book seems to speak to Nolitye directly, and implicitly praises her curiosity and drive for knowledge. However, the book somewhat undercuts the emphasis of seeking knowledge by reinforcing the importance of instinctive knowledge conferred through heritage, telling Nolitye: 'In fact the truth is that you already know the answer to your question—you just have to listen to yourself' (Duiker, 2006:129). The notion of traditional knowledge as hereditary ignores the challenges and complexities (highlighted in Mda's novel) involved in coming to a consensus about what such knowledge even is.

One effect of Duiker's position on traditional knowledge is that in so far as the underworld represents a static repository of timeless traditional knowledge, it is more of a live, interactive classroom for the children than a wilderness to be conquered. The children, with the infrequent exception of Four Eyes, do not so much experience the landscape as experience a contrived context where traditional knowledge is valid and necessary, knowledge, for example, that the hare is a trickster, that the dung beetle heals the road and so on. However, in replicating Haggard's portrayal of traditional Africa as outside time, a potential loss is the depiction of traditional knowledge as dynamic and contextual as conveyed by Mda. It is therefore important to consider the differences between Haggard and Duiker.

Firstly, the children are not the foreign tourists that Haggard's white protagonists are in terms of their ideological positioning; they are the inheritors of the knowledge they obtain. What Nolitye and her friends witness in the underworld is a vision of a worldview that once belonged to her people and had a functional place in the world; such a worldview had a relevance that the tides of history have buried. Secondly, the apparent similarities between Haggard's lost world and Duiker's should not indicate a similar irrelevance to the vicissitudes of time. All of Nolitye's interactions with the beings of the underworld function as models for behaviour that are moral, useful and empowering; this is the inherent value of the folktales these episodes draw upon.

For example, the knowledge that the hare is a trickster may not translate literally into the real world, but the cunning of the small animal remains an educational model for ways in which the disempowered and small may empower themselves. Shortly after entering the underworld the children fall for a trick played upon them by Vundla the hare, who uses their willingness to hold up the roof of his house as an opportunity to steal their torch. Upon meeting Vundla again, Nolitye takes a page from Vundla's book and uses wit and trickery to outsmart him in exchange for his knowledge of the location of the elephant graveyard. Vundla boasts to the children that he is the cleverest. He tells a story about the first Hare, ending with 'once a hare, always a trickster!' and tellingly says he knows 'if you're not strong you have to be clever' before going on to explain how he tricked the Zim (Duiker, 2006:218). Aside from providing an image for the disempowered and children specifically, the episode further impresses the usefulness of traditional knowledge, providing an example for Nolitye to follow. Nolitye preys on Vundla's vanity, and challenges him to a race. She then uses the stone to transform the other girls into her likeness and directs them to stand at intervals in the road so that

Vundla will think she has beaten him (Duiker, 2006:219). However, the effectiveness of the underworld as educational does not compensate for its lack of emotional effect.

In *King Solomon's Mines*, I examined an example of traversing over the African landscape in the imperial romance that is indicative of the power relations that structure that genre and position subjectivity. The African landscape in the imperial romance is traditionally one of bounty and lush beauty, producing awe that exceeds and overwhelms articulacy, as in Quatermain's repeated confessions of muteness 'before scenes both of wonder and horror' (Stiebel, 2001:13). Within Sandner's (2011:26) account of the sublime, this initial reaction immediately translates the subject's 'special ability to participate in the transcendent' along imperialist lines. The awe of the landscape is subsequently accommodated within language that yields up the landscape's treasures to a privileged subjectivity. To Haggard's heroes, the awe-inspiring Kukuanaland lies before them 'like a map' and is a deserved reward, 'a promised land' (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:75-78). In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda subverts the trope of the imperialist gaze. This is accomplished not simply by substituting white subjectivity with black subjectivity, but by dissolving subjectivity into the landscape. This is seen specifically in the character Camagu, whose immersion within the community of Qolorha is mirrored in dreams of himself as the riverbed over which the river flows. In Duiker's novel however, there is an entirely different relationship of subject vis-à-vis landscape with the added dimension of the subjects being children.

The children of Duiker's novel are neither dissolved into nor positioned in power over the landscape. Duiker's description is initially silent on how the children are located, oddly erasing their presence: 'It is morning in a remote, boulder-strewn valley' (Duiker, 2006:190). The narrative then locates subjectivity within the magical space without the effect of either

dissolution or dominance: 'They look around silently, in awe of the valley's beauty' (Duiker, 2006:190). The landscape awes the children as they experience 'a confrontation of the mind 'with something new, something certainly not "habitual"' (Sandner, 2011:25), but the result is landscape as empty canvas that can be interpreted in different ways. '"I don't think we're in Phola any more" remarks Nolitye as she 'looks around for signs of people but finds nothing. Empty veld stretches as far as the horizon' (Duiker, 2006:190).

Emptiness is an important aspect in the imperialist depiction of landscape traditionally signifying submissiveness, an absence of resistance and erasure of prior, indigenous ownership. In contrast, the three children of Duiker's novel all experience emptiness differently, inscribing the landscape with a diversity of meanings. Of the three, Four Eyes comes the closest to the romance hero, and is the only character in the novel to refer to their experiences as 'an adventure'. Gazing at 'Nolitye with two sets of shiny eyes…Four Eyes seems delighted with the scenery and whistles as he walks' (Duiker, 2006:190). Four Eyes in particular experiences the kind of absorbing enchantment associated with marvellous fantasy spaces, finding even its discomforts invigorating; he is 'engrossed in the scene around them. He ignores the gnats and midges buzzing round his face' which Bheki 'swats…full of wrath' (Duiker, 2006:194). Bheki experiences the underworld as frightening, though his feelings are gradually muted into background indifference: 'Bheki, not frightened any longer, tags along at the back…'.

Nolitye, however, has no emotional engagement with place at all. Focused on her objective, 'Nolitye concentrates on the rock-strewn path' (Duiker, 2006:192). Mendlesohn (2008:8) observes of the portal-quest fantasy that any frame that results in defamiliarization (such as the township space that frames the underworld as strange) helps 'to justify the explanation of

the world to the reader, and prepares us for the process of familiarization that takes place throughout the novel.' The discovering familiarisation of a landscape, framed as unfamiliar in its contrast with the frame, is what makes possible the imperialist ordering of mapping and description. However, it also creates 'a world through the layering of detail, and making that detail comprehensible. Given the need for comprehensibility, the only way to continually create the sense of wonder needed by the portal and quest fantasy is to embroider continually, to prevent the accretion of comfort' (Mendelsohn, 2008:9). This kind of delighted discovering of the landscape is entirely missing from Nolitye's encounter with the underworld.

In *The Hidden Star*, whilst the main protagonist's disengagement from the landscape does not render the landscape meaningless, the effect is that the experience of place is subordinated into a channel for plot. The depiction of enjoyment in the underworld sections, channelled solely and infrequently through Four Eyes, is oddly off-centre and irrelevant to the central experience of the story. The underworld space itself encompasses some of the diluted responses of the children. It inspires no intense desire, and is not endowed with enchanting qualities. 'Near the river the grass is long and brushes their legs. Weaver birds flit in and out of their nests waving on the reeds.' The air 'is scented with wild flowers' but also with 'the dank smell of the river nearby' (Duiker, 2006:186). The effects of place on the reader are consequently thin and ambiguous.

The underworld is, however, a place that is initially under siege by evil forces; this accounts for the negative associations in some aspects of the description. In marvellous fantasy terms, the underworld is itself infected by wrongness. In marvellous fantasies for children, its equivalents are Narnia under the thumb of the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the*

Wardrobe (1950), or the magic school Hogwarts of the Harry Potter novels infiltrated by Death-eaters in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). The underworld in Duiker's novel is restored, that is, saved from wrongness upon the defeat of Nctijana and MaMtonga at the end of the novel, after which a 'burst of light from the stone creates a rainbow', which is seen by the different animals who 'recognise it as a message from Nkulunkulu the Great One: birds sing in the trees and baboons shout from the tops of the hills; elephants trumpet on the plains' (Duiker, 2006:231). The animals in their diversity finally congregate in the valley in an image of unity meant to mirror the unity of Nolitye's people. The tribes will now prosper as they were always meant to do because they are united equally and because traditional knowledge has been restored. The stone declares:

> Now that you have come together as it was meant to have been right from the beginning of time, Nkulunkulu the Great One wishes for you to return to your tribes and deliver his message to them. Grow and be strong, for the light of wisdom has been shown to you again. Knowledge that had been obscured, like a hidden star, has been restored to you. But those dark days are to be no more. The ancestor gods have spoken: the tribes shall once more gather and live in peace (Duiker, 2006:231).

Finally, revitalisation and prosperity are represented spatially, as the landscape transforms in an image recognisable from stories encompassing Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Disney's *The Lion King* (1994).

> Grass starts sprouting all over the elephant graveyard. Soon bushes and shrubs, majestic trees and creepers fill the once barren land. The elephant bones crumble away and the pungent smell of decaying flesh clears. The scent of wild flowers and ripe berries fills the air. As soon as the elephant graveyard has been transformed into lush greenery, the animals once again scatter, leaving the children and Nolitye's parents marooned in the middle of a dense forest (Duiker, 2006:231).

In such marvellous fantasy works as the ones cited above, the effect of wrongness is to inspire desirability and thus fervour for the fight to restore the magic space to its true state. Spatial significance emerges in the ideals the magic space is meant to embody; both Narnia

and Hogwarts under the regimes of the correct moral authorities are spaces infused with intense desirability. Due to the importance of place in such tales, contrast is of the utmost importance within the ideological structuring of the narrative. The child protagonists are characteristically emotionally invested in the restoration of the magic space, and this is effected when the children are made aware of the contrast between enchanting desirability and the infection of wrongness. Wrongness is only upsetting to child characters because substantial portions of their stories emphasise what the magic place free of wrongness looks like and how desirable it is.

The depiction of magic space infected by wrongness in Duiker's novel, however, differs from these narratives in that its primary protagonist is not emotionally invested in the magic space. Nolitye smiles when she sees Nomakhosi one last time as 'a magnificently coloured sunbird…flashing the deepest of purples and greens as it hovers in front of them' only because 'she knows it is her faithful mentor and friend Nomakhosi' (Duiker, 2006:231). But there is no description of the effects of restoration on the children whatsoever. The novel then concludes hurriedly with the return to the township, which has remained unchanged. The unchanged status of Phola is the crux of the objections to the novel articulated by Inggs.

However, it may be argued that Nolitye's response makes sense within the priority given to the restoration of home in the novel which has very little to do with the disunity or lack of prosperity suffered by Nolitye's people. This is signified partly in the complete absence of any anticipation of the magical place. Early in the novel, Nolitye is told that 'there is so much fighting among the different groups and individual people' because the magic stone was split and 'scattered across the land' and we are told that Nolitye 'doesn't know whether to be scared or feel good. Until now she hadn't realised how important her stone was (Duiker,

2006:84). The objective of unity between Nolitye's people is not conveyed to her through any nationalist narrative about the importance of place, and there is no indication given to her that a place exists that embodies any of the ideals signified in the concept of unity. Nolitye is never told about the underworld until the closing chapters of the novel when the last stage of her quest commences. Upon entry into the underworld itself, there is also no suggestion of symbolic disunity among the animals. The importance of the stone's ability to bring people together is, moreover, never brought up as something that concerns Nolitye personally.

The result is that the effect of restoration has little resonance. When Nolitye defeats Nctjana and MaMtonga, the stone declares: 'You took up the challenge and found what your heart was aching for…And I'm whole again. Now it is time for the different tribes to come together as it was meant to be from the beginning of time' (Duiker, 2006:230). The thematic dissonance in the whole book is underlined here; Nolitye's heart aches for a reunion with her parents. Her personal, emotional stakes have nothing to do with bringing the tribes together, but with restoring her home.

However, home itself remains unaffected by the experience of the magical, that is, it continues to be sundered from the effects of Recovery. The concluding passage of *The Hidden Star* suggests that the worth of home is a given and, if anything, necessitated by a sundering from the magical:

> But most of all they can't wait to be in familiar surroundings again. They've missed the township with its dusty streets. They've missed MaMokoena's spaza shop, the shebeens and other small corner stores with their dilapidated roofs, even Rotten Nellie and her gang, moaning Mandla, Rex and the rowdy stray dogs. They've missed the squeezed-in shacks that leave little space for anything else, and the train that makes the tracks hum as it passes by (Duiker, 2006:233).

In a reversal of Recovery, it is the horrors of the magical that have rendered the flaws of home (‘dusty streets’, ‘dilapidated roofs’, gangs of bullies, stray abused animals and ‘squeezed-in shacks’) acceptable, and even desirable. Magic in Duiker’s rendering is a real and threatening force, and denying the validity of traditional knowledge allows magic in its darkest forms to tear internally and insidiously at the structures that make mundane sources of wrongness like poverty manageable. Such structures consist principally of healthy relationships between elders and children, which provide love, protection and the knowledge to grapple with the realities of South African life. But an essential component of home and the beneficial links between generations for Duiker appear to be the conduit through which traditional knowledge may pass to the young. Such knowledge is not the key to seeing home in a new way, but simply a grim necessity to prevent the simple strengths of home from falling prey to dark, magical forces that are both psychologically and physically real.

In having her parents restored, Nolitye regains a sense of belonging within her home space, but the novel does not enable Recovery. It is important to note that feelings of belonging in themselves have no direct link to Recovery, which enables awe and wonder, not belonging. Tolkien saw the opposite of Recovery as appropriation, thinking that things belong to us and ceasing to find the ordinary special and luminous so that they have become mundane and dull and lost their appeal. The purpose of Recovery is to remind us that things are not ordinary, that they do not belong to us, that they are ‘free and wild, no more yours than they were you’ (Tolkien [1964] 2001:58-59). Recovery for Tolkien is the antidote to boring, not the antidote to alienation. The restoration of a feeling of belonging is important in both *The Heart of Redness* and *The Hidden Star*, but Recovery and the desirability that goes with it are a step further from that.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Camagu is not bored by Hillbrow, he is repelled by it. In *The Hidden Star*, Nolitye is not bored by Phola, she is horrified by it. Boring would be an improvement for these characters. The absence of horror or revulsion is not enough to enable awe and wonder and the intense desirability that results from these qualities. In *The Heart of Redness*, Camagu makes the leap from revulsion, through boredom, to desire, because the magical qualities of Qolorha, though indeterminate, enable aesthetic effects on him in the mode of the sublime. Haggard's characters in *King Solomon's Mines* are already inspired by South Africa, the place where 'trading, hunting, fighting or exploring' are a way of life and where 'perfect' nights 'sometimes occur'; their quest is a means of exploring the mythic extremes of South Africa's inherent qualities (Haggard, 2010 [1885]:3-24). But Nolitye's quest concludes not with the Recovery of place, but with the restoration to domestic mundanity. If there is a glint of wonder to her parents now that Nolitye has regained them through such extraordinary means (and this is never described), her experience of Phola remains unchanged, purged of witches but still that place of 'other things too that make her fear the dark—strange noises like an owl hooting on a rooftop. Or gunshots that startle you from sleep, or people who suddenly start screaming, or a car screeching down the road as if speeding away from someone or something…' (Duiker, 2006:13).

Chapter Five

Conclusion: *The South African Marvellous, Challenges and Potential*

In my introduction, I identify a representation of setting characterised by intense desirability that seems specific to the marvellous aesthetic, noting the absence of this kind of representation in fantastic literary productions representing South Africa. I delineate the marvellous in order to identify the structural features of the marvellous aesthetic that give rise to its appealing representations of setting. By doing so, I hope to discover whether there is something in the South African context inherently at odds with the marvellous, and why the South African fantastic has taken on such radically different forms specifically in relation to the portrayal of the South African setting. However, it is important to note that the marvellous itself has not been my concern; nor is the absence of the marvellous in South African literature the gap driving this study. Rather, it is the representation of setting that seems to arise so naturally from the aesthetic properties of the marvellous that has been my subject, the desirability that Tolkien ([1964] 2001:53) calls 'enchantment' and that Sandner (2011) identifies as the fantastic sublime. This is the quality of appeal characterising setting in the marvellous, when it is transformed by the fantastic, which captures intense experience in a perfect balance between the void of alienation and the banality of the ordinary.

Can the fantastic be used to configure the South African setting in such a way? My findings reveal that representations of the South African setting using the fantastic to effect desirability in the mode of the sublime are not impossible. However, there are numerous, valid reasons why the marvellous subgenre as found elsewhere has not been the key to success in this regard. Furthermore, to the extent that representations of setting in the mode of the fantastic sublime appear to go hand in hand with the marvellous, these kinds of portrayals

of the South African setting have been either scarce and difficult to achieve, or problematic and unwelcome.

King Solomon's Mines, a nineteenth-century novel, popularised trends within the marvellous subgenre that have proved deeply problematic from the perspective of postcolonial ethics. Whilst unabashedly steeped in a delight generated by an imagined South Africa suffused with deep desirability, the novel's othering of black peoples and culture and its centralisation of white subjectivity renders it untenable as a model for a South African marvellous subgenre. The failure of the African romance to develop into an identifiable subgenre of African marvellous fantasy is most probably indicative of the unsuitability of Haggard's model on a number of fronts. It is not only that South African writers have been uninterested in taking up the challenge of developing Haggard's model into a more palatable, less dated, marvellous mode. It is also that the scarcity of texts representing Africa as a primary setting in foreign marvellous fantasies suggests authors elsewhere have found Haggard's delight in 'Africannery', as Stiebel (2001:42) referred to it, naïve and unconvincing. Since the heyday of literary representations of imperial daydreams set in idyllic, wild Africa, it seems the continent truly has become crystallised in the minds of the public, both in Africa and elsewhere, as the place of darkness that Stiebel (2001:21) notes was becoming established in the public imagination as early as the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference.

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, published in the fresh aftermath of South Africa's first democratic elections, provides an artful example of how to generate the desirability of place that Haggard capitalises upon for a more complex positioning of subjectivity in relation to fantasy and realism. Specifically, the way the novel never loses sight of the sublime pleasure of its setting, even while interrogating the numerous certainties and questionable politics on

which the marvellous has traditionally balanced such pleasure, is a rare and difficult feat. The accomplishments of *The Heart of Redness* (2000) might have suggested that South African authors had begun to find ways to relate positively and constructively to local settings using the fantastic on their own terms. However, the challenges highlighted in *The Hidden Star*, a novel published more recently than *The Heart of Redness*, would seem to contradict this encouraging development. Even though Duiker's novel takes a form one would expect to be comforting and optimistic, that of a children's story, *The Hidden Star* is less confident in its ability to find sublime joy within the experience of a South African setting than Mda's much more complex and adult work of magical realism. Not only does *The Hidden Star* conceal more horror and banality than Mda's novel, but under scrutiny it appears *The Hidden Star* eschews the marvellous form altogether in its preference for an intrusion fantasy structure, the form Mendelsohn (2008:142) finds conducive to horror. Yet all the novels studied in this thesis, *The Hidden Star* included, are important in what they tell us about the challenges that beset the South African fantastic in relation to literary representations of a positive relationship to South African spaces in the mode of the marvellous sublime.

It is important to remember that none of the novels studied in this thesis are marvellous fantasies. They are not trying to be marvellous fantasies and failing. Yet, by using genre theory, I investigate the absence of the marvellous in the South African fantastic by analysing three novels that evoke, some more artificially than others, aspects of the marvellous. Like the circling light constituted of millions of stars that indicates the presence of a black hole in astronomy, these novels suggest the properties of the void whose presence they indicate.

Firstly, the absence registers vexation in its relationship to the legacy of the African romance that spawned the subgenre it stubbornly, and with good reason, resists. No author dabbling in

the quest structure, defamiliarization, and the sublime aesthetic can ignore the close alliance such properties share with imperial ideology. *King Solomon's Mines* exemplifies ways in which quests become impositions of power, defamiliarization becomes othering, and the sublime merely translates to a revelry in domination whose main purpose is to inscribe and serve foreign subjectivity.

The Heart of Redness, on the other hand, signifies the complexity and difficulty to be encountered in an attempt to create a narrative that performs functions similar to those of the marvellous aesthetic within the South African context. Its relationship to the black hole, that is, its refusal to enter into the model form of the marvellous true, is one of interrogation and transformation rather than pure resistance. The novel firstly affirms the challenges posed to the marvellous fantastic by the very existence of the magical realism genre in that it interrogates the seeming certainties by which the marvellous distinguishes between realism and fantasy. Marvellous fantasy, when it flourishes, is protected by an imaginary fortress whose purpose is to preserve its simplified and homogenous perspective on modernity, rationality and fantasy. Magical realism, by definition, cannot enter into the certainties on which the marvellous turns; nor can it ever coexist with the marvellous without ringing its challenges at the latter's gates. Magical realism is, in effect, diversity's answer to the perspective that positions fantasy and realism, modernity and the archaic, as universally agreed fixities. However, an analysis of *The Heart of Redness* also reveals that the transcendent joy in the sublime beauty of place is not inextricably tied to the politics of Haggard and his ilk. A more complex handling of subjectivity, a more self-reflexive relationship to nation and identity, and the embrace of uncertainty regarding magic all serve to utilize the portal quest structure sensitively and constructively. As a result, this novel's

awed joy in its setting is unmistakable and yet it is worlds away from anti-intellectualism associated with the marvellous.

In contrast with Mda's novel, *The Hidden Star* appears to be more accepting of the marvellous aesthetic but under scrutiny reveals its rejection of marvellous aesthetic properties to a greater extent. An intrusion fantasy at its core, Duiker's children's story is more about managing horror than finding delight. What delight there is, in the charms of friendship and pure intent, is not brave enough to rise to the level of transcendent joy and never seeps downward to transfigure space. The horrors that threaten the banal comforts of Nolitye's world are too urgently important for Nolitye's imagination to be ignited by a vision of a South Africa charged with the sublime beauty and desirability of the marvellous. Strangely, this seems to be the rule in the South African fantastic, with visions such as Mda's in *The Heart of Redness* being the exception.

Several years ago, I began my search for the sublime experience of wonder and desirability in a fictional South African setting transfigured by magic as described by Tolkien and so wonderfully encapsulated in his own stories depicting the pseudo-English farmlands and forests of Middle-earth. At the time, my discovery of Wood's thesis on the fantastic in South African fiction was tremendously exciting. Here was a critic who had made the subject of an entire study the passionate argument for the value of the fantastic. Perhaps Wood's journey had yielded answers about the absence of a magical, desirable South Africa in fiction, or better yet, perhaps her search had revealed the existence of such fiction itself. After having read Wood's thesis, I was struck by what I found. Far from concerning itself with the depiction of a desirable South Africa, Wood's study rather celebrated South African fantastic

fiction for the reverse. In her conclusion, Wood applauds the 're-enchantment' of South Africa in the fantastic works of Vladislavic, but cautions that:

> The term 're-enchantment' needs to be used in a qualified sense, for it can easily be seen to imply a Tolkienesque conception of the fantastic, in which the ordinary is irradiated by the beauty and sublimity which, in the latter writer's view, represent the predominant characteristics of the mode. Part of the force that infuses Vladislavic's fantastical recreations of the familiar derives from the way in which he often infuses the ordinary with dark, sometimes even diabolical energies. This contrasts with Tolkien's own fantasies, which express a deep nostalgia for that which is unattainable within modern life. In his use of the fantastic, on the other hand, Vladislavic reminds us of the unsettling, dangerous depths underlying our reality (Wood, 2001:172).

Wood's observations on the work of Christopher Hope and André Brink are equally striking in their divergence from what Attebery (1992:2) argues is what most readily comes to mind when the term 'fantasy' is used in the context of literature, that is, the sublime desirability of place characterised by Tolkien. According to Wood (2001:104), place in Hope's fiction is characterised by the uncanny which 'operates at [a] level of alienation, in that the South Africa his central characters inhabit is not a place in which many of them feel safe or at ease'. Furthermore, she goes on to argue, Hope's 'use of the grotesque' differs from 'the grotesqueries in the work of…'other magical realists' which have a 'celebratory, regenerative quality that Hope's gruesome depictions of twisted, broken bodies lack' though both perform the essential Bakhtin-ian function of 'leading men out of the confines of apparent (false) unity.' Brink, in Wood's estimation, is less successful because he 'appears to assume that the fantastic is a literary mode which can be easily utilised to work its transformative magic on the South African context:

> By envisaging a fantastically charged re-imagining of this country's history as providing a way of understanding, and through that, acquiring some sense of control over that history, he seems to endorse the assumption, all too readily adopted in contemporary literature, that the fantastic provides some sort of cure-all for interconnected and social ills (Wood, 2001:223).

Wood's study highlights two important points for me. One is that experimentations in the fantastic within South African literature exist; it is fantasy within the mode of the marvellous that does not. Two, even a critic strongly in favour of the fantastic like Wood expresses implied objections in principle to the marvellous aesthetic. For example, in her cautionary reference to Tolkien-esque enchantment, Wood implies an equation between the desirability of settings in this mode and self-indulgent nostalgia. Wood's distaste for the marvellous is not uncommon in fantasy criticism, carrying echoes of Rosemary Jackson's (1981:9) characterisation of the marvellous as a genre that channels desire into 'religious longing and nostalgia' and retreats from any 'profound confrontation with existential dis-ease.' What is striking about the South African context is not the dismissal of the marvellous within the orbit of academic criticism on intellectual grounds, but the fact that no subgenre so specifically conducive to the desirability of place even exists to criticise.

It has not been my purpose in this study to contest perspectives that argue that literary representations of boredom, alienation and even revulsion in relation to the South African setting have no place or value. Such depictions can confront readers with important aspects of the human condition and are often deeply compelling in their intellectual complexity. Moreover, it is apparent that representations of pleasure in setting have the potential to become vehicles for simplified nationalist ideologies or spaces of escape from constructive engagement with the real world. However, it is my contention that boredom, alienation and revulsion cannot be the only responses literature allows us to feel about the South African setting. To many, such depictions can alienate readers from any engagement with South African realities and effectively divert their desire for joy and beauty to foreign fictions where such qualities are characteristic of entire subgenres, such as the marvellous.

As I noted previously, I do not wish to suggest that positive experiences of the South African setting exist nowhere in South African literature. It is simply that the marvellous is characterised by certain features that make it particularly conducive to intensely appealing depictions of place. Rosemary Jackson's observation that the marvellous retreats from any 'profound confrontation with existential dis-ease' is also an insight into the way the subgenre's alliance with a sublime aesthetic in the particular mode of enchantment ensures a profound intensity of experience without the shift into horror that intense experience potentially entails. While the confrontation with existential dis-ease has value, South Africans, and the world at large, deserve to experience more than dis-ease or mere charm and contentment in relation to South African spaces. There is no reason that sublime beauty and intense, transcendent emotions such as 'joy, poignant as grief', as Tolkien ([1964] 2001:69) called it, cannot be yielded by literary experiences of the South African setting. Few other places can be as much in need of Recovery as this one. Yet it is clear that such an undertaking will require skillful and sensitive handling.

Perhaps the great need for such care is why none of the novels studied in this thesis adapt what is the most recognizable (if purely cosmetic) feature of the marvellous, the secondary world. All three novels, even the two by Haggard and Duiker that engage in world-building in the later portions of their narratives, depict expansions of a realist South Africa; they do not depart from it altogether. In my discussion of *The Heart of Redness*, I suggest there are good reasons to reject purely fictional representations of South African fantasylands. Firstly there is the negative escapism and political complacency, alluded to above, that might potentially be enabled by such a clear imaginative break with realism. Secondly, *King Solomon's Mines* demonstrates the ways in which mythopoeic constructions like Kukuanaland can negate the relevance of positive imaginings of Africa, relegating them to

what is truly nothing more than imaginative tourism for privileged subjectivities. Yet, considering the complete absence of such works, and allowing for the provision that secondary world fantasies do not dominate the literary landscape, there remains something to be said for adaptations in the South African context of more aspects of traditional marvellous fantasies, including the secondary world. The following argument should not be construed as either prescribing or projecting future developments in South African literature, but to expand further on the status of the marvellous aesthetic in this context and to hopefully provide further insights for reflection.

There is a potency to purely imaginative constructions in secondary world fantasies that cannot be denied. Because of the intrinsic otherness of fantasy, 'that which is in excess at the level of the sign', the capacity for the sublime in fantasy will always be at a level at which it is difficult, though not impossible, for realism to compete (Sandner, 2011:25). This means there is a natural potential for the rendering of transcendent experience in fantasy that realism simply does not as easily accomplish. This is not to say that every secondary world fantasy necessarily renders the sublime, or that fantasy authors do not require skill to enable transcendent experience. It is simply that, to the extent that the sublime is dependent on the confrontation of the mind 'with something new, something certainly not "habitual,"' that causes reality to '[destabilize] as the mind reels in excess', the fantastic will always inherently possess this quality as it, by definition, 'brings amazement through the realization of estrangement from language' (Sandner, 2011:25-26).

Successful marvellous fantasy takes care not to produce pure estrangement, as this evokes alienation, but transforms the familiar enough to make radiant the familiar with wonder. Thus secondary world fantasies, when delicately balanced between the boredom generated by the

purely familiar and the alienation of the fantastic extreme, possess the natural potential for enchantment. Or as Tolkien ([1964] 2001:22-23) puts it:

> When we can take green from grass, blue from heaven, and red from blood, we have already an enchanter's power – upon one plane; and the desire to wield that power in the world external to our mind awakes. It does not follow that we shall use that power well upon any plane. We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the cold worm. But in such 'fantasy', as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator.

However, the challenge, as magical realism reminds us, is that the distinction between the fantastic and the real in marvellous fantasy is assumed to be universal. In order to effect wonder and Recovery, the reader must recognize the familiar and distinguish it from the imagined. As such there must be an agreement in the readership about what can be real and what can only be imagined, something that diversity makes difficult. South Africans also cannot draw on a shared cultural mythology, either active or exploded by modernity.

A South African secondary world fantasy would have to show sensitivity regarding local traditions and beliefs and not simply draw, with creative abandon, on local mythologies with the same disregard that Tolkien was able to in his depiction of elves, for example. Such depictions would have to be handled with an awareness that some aspects of the magical, on which the narrative draws, have an active relevance for certain readers and thus such beliefs need to be sensitively handled. For example, depictions of genies, based on the jinn that figure in modern Muslim belief, appear with some regularity in European and American marvellous fantasies. Recent examples include the *Children of the Lamp* (2005-2011) books by P.B. Kerr and *Rebel of the Sands* by Alwayn Hamilton (2016). Produced invariably by non-Muslim authors, these depictions appear with the same creative abandon as imagery drawn from European folk tales. The insensitivity is not that such depictions appear in fiction,

fantasy or realist, but in the way such depictions operate to effectively index figures like jinn as Orientalist exoticisms to be exploited with imaginative relish. Such works rarely bother to incorporate figures like these as they are experienced in the communities that believe in them. Stephens and McCallum (1998:231) explain the curious position occupied by fantastic figures drawn from a culture belonging neither to the author nor the intended audience:

> Genies [Jinn] are not human, but spirits of enormous power, often rather amoral, often bringing with them a frisson of danger. They originate in Islamic demonology, and are therefore comfortably separable from the demons of Christian Europe; and they belong to the realm of oriental fantasy, a make-believe medieval world of magic, of immense wealth, of sensuality, of instant gratification of desire, and of sudden, irrational, and barbaric cruelties. For the modern invented stories, in particular, these elements invest the story with a sense of radical otherness against which Western humanist values are constructed as culturally normative.

For another example, the burnings of J.K Rowling's Harry Potter books by various church communities out of disapproval of what is perceived as the author's positive depiction of witchcraft signify that the witch or wizard figure is by no means as safely laid to rest by modernity and thus available for metaphoric use as Rowling may have assumed (Attebery, 2014:160). Clearly the sensitivities regarding the magical in fantasy fiction are by no means isolated to non-Western contexts. Although my focus is on the South African context, the issues I wish to highlight here have relevance for the production of marvellous fantasies worldwide if we wish to move into an era marked increasingly by sensitivity to diversity. As I suggest above, such sensitivity does not mean that aspects of the magical originating in cultures where the magical is still operative should never be depicted but that certain issues need to be considered in the way such depictions are handled.

However, certain challenges appear to be inherent to the marvellous framework. A magical realist novel like *The Heart of Redness* is capable of utilizing techniques that sensitively

manage diverse perspectives regarding the magical, techniques that are not available in secondary world narratives. The setting of *The Heart of Redness* is realist, and the magical is an aspect of its realism; these are factors foregrounded in the novel's explicit discourse and in its magical realist form. The reader of the novel knows that the setting is one they can encounter physically and the discussions around the magical are ones that occur in real South African contexts. In contrast, a secondary world fantasy is premised on the fact that the setting is both fictional and transfigured by possibilities made available solely through the imagination of the author; therefore the magical in such stories is assumed to be functioning solely as metaphoric vehicle. When dark wizards in the Harry Potter books use the killing curse to achieve their ends, the curse functions as a metaphor for ways to kill and the uses of power in the real world; there is no encoded message regarding the proper use of curses. An important aspect of this is that the curse itself becomes an exoticising transplantation device that allows the reader to consider the heavy theme of taking life at a remove.

In contrast, the magical, when drawn from modern and/or marginalized belief systems, cannot be exoticized in this way as it essentially amounts to othering. These are all good reasons why an entirely new mythology, magical system, and framework of belief consisting of material that speaks to modern challenges and concerns might be a better framework for a South African secondary world fantasy than one that draws upon traditions that might be mishandled or promote unquestioning nostalgia. Such an undertaking is easier said than done, however, as fantasy creations always evoke ideas familiar from the author's awareness and experience, sometimes in the form of stereotypes, even when not intended by the author. As Jackson (1981:8) reminds us, fantasy is 'not to do with inventing another non-human world: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar, and

apparently "new"…' There will always be challenges involved in the fraught business of representation, especially in a world built on histories of political inequality where the ability to represent self has been a privilege not enjoyed by all. However, the need to turn to a more positive and constructive relationship with the South African setting in literature remains an urgent and valuable one.

I observe earlier that the encouraging success of Mda's magical realist, positive, self-reflexive and invigorating depiction of the South African setting in *The Heart of Redness* does not seem to have marked the beginning of an exploration of similar possibilities and experiments in South African fantastic literature more generally. Instead, it has been noted that there has something of an 'upswing in the production of horror writing in South Africa' (Duncan, 2014:86). Indeed, a cursory search of South African fictions in the mode of the fantastic published in the last fifteen years reveals an overwhelming trend towards horror. To list only a few examples, *Deadlands*, the dystopian zombie novel by Lily Herne, appeared in 2011 at roughly the same time as the first novel in S.L. Grey's successful *Downside* series, *The Mall* (2011). The celebrated *Zoo City* (2010) by Lauren Beukes dominates the results of any search with the tag 'fantastic' in South African fiction. Creative and unflinching, Beukes' novel paints an alternative vision of South Africa in which animal spirits attach themselves to people with dark histories of violence or criminality. The device effectively allows Beukes to use magic, not to effect Recovery, but to intimately confront a South Africa rife with corruption and consumerist decadence. The depiction of a South African setting in *Zoo City* certainly fits Wood's preferred definition of 're-enchantment' in which 'fantastical recreations of the familiar derive' from the way in which the ordinary is infused 'with dark, sometimes even diabolical energies'. As Duncan (2014:86) notes:

> The closing stages of the narrative turn on scenes of self-harm and sorrocidal sacrifice. In an underground cavern. Lapped by a lake teeming

> with corpses, human and animal bodies are opened up to particularly unpleasant effect, and, in these passages at least, *Zoo City* is vividly, definitively, horrifying.

Such fictions are imaginative and exciting; certainly Beukes's work has been applauded for how compelling it is both aesthetically and thematically (Duncan, 2014:86). However, it is strange that there appears to be no discussion about the fact that the use of the magical to depict South African settings solely in the mode of horror appears to dominate the landscape of South African fantastic fictions.

Expanding the search beyond the horror genre reveals tendencies that are in some ways more troubling. The flavor of unease that is so strong in the work of prominent magical realist authors such as Brink, Vladislavic and Hope has been observed by Wood. The apparent distrust of a truly desirable South African setting at the core of *The Hidden Star* has been discussed, and Duiker's other novels such as *Thirteen Cents* (2001) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2002) are known to be heavy, disturbing works of gritty realism. Sadly, the potential in *The Hidden Star* for development into a series or explorations into other children's fantasy novels by the author will never be realized as Duiker passed away in 2005.

In children's literature, one must look as far back as *The Witch Woman on the Hogsback* (1987) and *The Shadow of the Wild Hare* (1986) for experimentation in anything approaching the marvellous. It is perhaps appropriate that these novels are no longer available in print, as they have been observed to perform many neo-colonial functions in the mode of Haggard's romances. In their overview of South African children's literature from 1985-1995, MacCann and Maddy (2001:89) write that although some writers from this period 'appear respectful toward Africa', they 'use mythology in ways that underscore an alleged, primitive mindset.' Furthermore:

> African folklore is sometimes used as a vehicle for suggesting Black/White unity within a South African context. This intention falls short of success when the lore becomes a pastiche of 'heart of darkness' stereotypes…Black characters are mired in a dysfunctional, pre-modern world and White characters briefly enter that domain as benefactors, but the European notion of carrying a 'White man's burden' can hardly produce a lasting basis for friendship.

Looking just outside this period, which might be expected to 'show regression rather than progression' (MacCann and Maddy, 2001:117), Peter Slingsby's children's fantasy *The Joining* (1996) is a more thoughtful engagement with South African identities. Though its omniscient narrator tells the story solely from the perspective of a young boy who is identified as white, the main protagonist has a complex relationship with racial identity (having relatives of mixed race on his mother's side) and the novel incorporates a racially diverse cast of children. Set even more immediately after the first democratic elections than *The Heart of Redness, The Joining* tells the story of four children who slip back in time to an era of South African history when the region was primarily inhabited by the hunter-gatherer people called the /Xam (the San), portrayed in the novel as living idyllically in harmony with each other and their environment. As in *The Heart of Redness,* the San as a marker of loss resulting from racial violence is central to their appearance in *The Joining*. As the children learn the values of harmony that Slingsby identifies solely with the /Xam, they also learn that the /Xam and their legacy are destined to be destroyed by the waves of invasion that history will bring to them, initially in form of the northern African tribes and culminating in the violence of European colonization. As Jenkins (2006:143) comments, Slingsby wishes to induct 'not only the modern characters of the story but also the modern reader into the world of the San'.

Yet, despite the author's explicit intention to underline the superior values of San culture (Slingsby, 1996:154) *The Joining* contains many of the same problems of representation as

King Solomon's Mines. As the children gradually become integrated into the /Xam, the novel essentially portrays /Xam culture in service to the modern South African subjectivities represented by the children who are able to assume central roles among them after only a short period, while the /Xam are depicted as both timeless and historically doomed. However, the most startling aspect of *The Joining* is its deeply cynical conviction that modern South Africa, far from being desirable, even after the peaceful transition to democracy, cannot be a home fit for children. Unlike Nolitye in *The Hidden Star*, who is committed to returning home despite the violence and poverty of township life, the child characters of *The Joining* make the choice to remain in the past with the /Xam rather than return to modern South Africa. When one of the children, Jeremy, puts the question of return to another character Phumzile, she questions the concept of modern South Africa functioning in any way as 'home':

> 'Home?' she said at last. 'We live behind a concrete wall. In Khayelitsha. We're not allowed to go into the street. At night we always hear shots. Sometimes we hear screams. When the taxi takes us home from school my grandmother meets us at the rank, then we walk home quickly. We have to get behind that wall as quickly as we can. Here…' she looked around the cave, '…there are no walls. No. I don't want to go home' (Slingsby, 1996:114).

It may be argued that Slingsby's point was not to be cynical but to impress his readers with the urgent need for South Africans to rethink their relationship with each other and their environment at the crucial point of the birth of democracy when peace was so fragile. In the Author's Note, Slingsby asks: 'Is there nothing that a South Africa emerging from a legacy of hatred, jealousy, suspicion and violence can learn from those who inhabited our country for *ninety-eight thousand years* longer than *any* of the rest of us?' (Slingsby, 1996:154). However, in failing to provide a literary representation of how such learning could be applied in the present and by consigning his characters in their desperate need for a home to a past he

inscribes as inevitably doomed, the novel signifies that any investment in modern South Africa has no value.

In depictions of the South African setting in other novels, Zakes Mda has never shown the same kind of positive orientation apparent in *The Heart of Redness*. Although Mda's other novels often seem to begin with a similar romantic impulse, his drive towards self-reflexivity and complexity resolves itself more often into ambivalence or the grotesque. For example, *The Whale Caller* (2006) is a wistful spin on the whale caller of Hermanus (a South African coastal town), traditionally one who performs the task of calling people to watch when whales become visible from the Hermanus coastline. In Mda's romantic reimagining, the whale caller is actually able to communicate with whales, that is, he is a caller of whales. *The Whale Caller* is neither a fantasy nor truly a magical realist novel, as it is heavily implied that the whale caller's connection with whales exists solely in the character's mind. Yet Mda's literary expression of his wish that the whale caller be an actual caller of whales brings to mind Tolkien's ([1964] 2001:13) argument that the essential function of fantasy is in the satisfaction of 'certain primordial desires', one such desire being 'to hold communion with other living things'. However, though *The Whale Caller* seems to originate in this romantic impulse, in describing the love affair between a whale caller and a whale the caller names Sharisha in a setting suffused by a hauntingly magical quality, the novel ultimately ends in a tragedy that undermines its romantic yearning. Sharisha becomes beached and is killed after failed attempts to rescue her and the book concludes with the whale caller renaming himself the Hermanus penitent. Although lyrical in many places, the story is characterised by a constant note of unease regarding the whale caller's imaginative abandon to his fantastic love affair and ultimately sounds a warning note about the potential for such fantastic yearnings to turn to hopeless delusion.

Of *Ways of Dying* (1995), Sue-Ann Anita Foster (2005:39) writes that here Mda depicts the magical rebirth of a child who has been starved by his father only to be killed shortly after in order to capture the 'extraordinary and excessive nature of violence in Black South African communities—a fact that needs to be highlighted, Mda suggests, because violence has become a quotidian and normalised phenomenon'. Here the magical does not enable Recovery, or enchantment, but rather maximises horror.

Another novel by Mda, *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) is bifurcated into parallel plots following a pair of twins, Dikosha and Radisene. One plotline, Dikosha's, is suffused with the magical and optimistically transcendent, describing Dikosha's embrace of the magical traditions revealed to her by the Barwa paintings that surround her village and that mysteriously keep her young. The other plotline, Radisene's, is starkly realist in its depiction of Radisene's descent into the corrupted world of insurance fraud after he leaves his home village for the city. The novel ends ambivalently when the consequences of Radisene's lifestyle force him into fleeing back to his home village where he makes the shocking discovery of Dikosha's agelessness and kidnaps her in an unexplained act of desperation. Dikosha's plea, 'What's going to become of us, Radisene?' and Radisene's reply that effectively concludes the novel, 'I don't know', suggests Mda's unwillingness to resolve the novel's dual nature in favour of either the bleak limits of its realism or the transcendent possibilities of the magical.

Of the novels Mda has written, others are less magical in either form or mood than the novels discussed above, being either traditional realist novels or depictions of the mindsets of characters that abandon themselves to imagination and artistic freedom. A novel that belongs in the somewhat different category of historical fiction and therefore contributes to this

discussion from another angle entirely is one of Mda's most recent publications, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* (2013).

Veronica Schanoes (2012:236) notes that the writers 'of historical fiction and of fantasy [are similar in that both] must engage in world-building, in constructing and familiarizing their readers with a world foreign to their own and yet fully realized as a world complete unto itself with its own mores, customs and tensions.' As a work of historical fiction, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* provides a model of world building for a South African secondary world fantasy in its vision of a pre-colonial Africa rarely seen in literature: without any European presence it is diverse, complex, culturally rich and sophisticated and absolutely teeming with the energies of historical flux. This is a vision of pre-colonial Africa that directly contradicts the idea, popularised by authors such as Haggard in the nineteenth century, that before contact with Europe, Africa existed in a kind of timeless primitivism and had no history of its own.

Set in the thirteenth century long before Europeans set down the borders that demarcated South Africa, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* takes place principally in the historical kingdom of Mapungubwe (now Limpopo in modern South Africa). The kingdom's vibrant associations with the outside world connect it first with outlying African kingdoms and peoples and, more remotely, with Asia and the Middle East, especially China and Arabia. A historical novel first, the work may be called magical realist in its incorporation of the trances and visions of certain religious practices within the novel's realism. However, here, as in Mda's other novels, realism is a matter of perspective, making the novel irreverent magical realism in its critique of 'claims to truth and coherence' and insistence of 'showing…up [such claims to truth] as culturally and historically contingent' (Warnes, 2009a:12-13).

The Sculptors of Mapungubwe tells the story of Rendani and Chata, the son and foster son respectively of the royal sculptor of Mapungubwe, and the rivalries between them that pivot on their contrasting orientations to artistic creation. These contrasting orientations mirror the tension between realist and fantastic as Rendani sculpts his art as close to life as possible while Chata sculpts in the fantastic images drawn from the trances taught to him by his mother. However, while the novel sets up a vibrant world throbbing with colour and complexity, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* lacks the structure to engage a reader in its spaces as effectively as a marvellous fantasy; this is not surprising since this is simply not Mda's intention. Instead the historical world of Mapungubwe brought to life in his novel functions as a framework for the discourse on art that Mda wishes to explore. As such, the characters do not so much react with wonder to the world around them but rather with lengthy thought shifts, described by the narrator, as they process challenges to their preconceived notions of the world or of art. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, it is noteworthy how world-building in this novel provides an example of secondary world construction not dissimilar from those that characterise marvellous fantasy. If we can imagine such a world combined with the engaging energies of a different narrative structure, such as the portal-quest in marvellous fantasy, *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* is evidence that a South African secondary world fantasy of considerable aesthetic and constructive potency may not be impossible. Mda himself effectively used the portal-quest structure in *The Heart of Redness*.

What is lacking is not the potential in the South African setting for fantastic portrayals of immense desirability. What is lacking is any sense of urgency about the need for portrayals of the South African setting that draw readers in, not away to foreign shores. The marvellous fantasy form may not be the answer to this need, but a need exists nonetheless for portrayals of South Africa that compel our attention through desirability and not solely through moral

obligation. As Gaylard (2005:1) notes, '...to think of the truly postcolonial is an imaginative activity, for the human past, present and foreseeable future is dominated by nations, colonies and empires of all kinds'. To encourage positive imaginings of the country South Africa can be, we need visions that draw us to South Africa and excite our desire. South Africans are like Camagu in *The Heart of Redness*, so disillusioned with the corrupt and bleak South Africa (so vividly brought to life in the horrors of our literature) that he decides to return to America. Like Camagu, we need 'a peddler of dreams, with a bagful of dreams waiting to be dreamt. A whole storage full of dreams' (Mda, 2000:39). Strangely, the spark needed to ignite the much needed trend towards positive representations of the South African setting might already have occurred, not in South Africa or in literature, but in film.

In 2018, Marvel Studios released *Black Panther*, a superhero film directed by Ryan Coogler that is notable for its African setting characterised by a near utopian functionality based on technological advancement. Derived from the Marvel comic title of the same name, the film depicts a fictional African history in which a substance called vibranium, derived from a fallen meteorite, allows a small number of African tribes to create the most technologically advanced society in the world, based in the fictional African region of Wakanda. However, the fear of being engulfed by the chaos of war and European invasion has resulted in the rulers of Wakanda enforcing a strict policy of isolation which they successfully maintain, in part by pretending that Wakanda is an impoverished third-world nation. The ethics of maintaining this isolation while allowing Africa and the descendants of its enslaved peoples to suffer over centuries emerges as the primary theme of the film as Wakanda's ruler and superhero protagonist, T'Challa, played by Chadwick Boseman, is forced to confront these issues by his orphaned cousin Erik 'Killmonger' Stevens, played by Michael B. Jordan. Abandoned in America after his father is executed for selling Wakanda's vibranium-based

weapons to outsiders, Killmonger's primary goal is to win Wakanda's throne from T'Challa and end its policy of isolation. The film effectively broadens its exploration into the uses of power when Killmonger reveals his wish to use Wakanda's weapons to arm Africa's descendants in a vengeful policy of aggressive African imperialism that will see Wakanda rule a global empire.

Black Panther is not a marvellous fantasy and derives from the science-fiction oriented, comic book superhero genre. However, in comparison with marvellous fantasy traditions, the construct of Wakanda is interesting for a number of reasons. Before I discuss this further, it must be noted that in its vision of a technologically advanced African utopia, *Black Panther* is not the first and only of its kind, as Tade Thompson (2018) argues in her blog post 'Please Stop Talking About the "Rise" of African Science Fiction'. Thompson (2008) makes the important point that such fictions have existed since as early as the 1930s. Yet the massively broad accessibility and reach of Marvel's interconnected superhero films has generated a sense of hype around the Afrocentric aesthetic of the film that suggests that as far as the mainstream is concerned, it may as well be (Smith, 2018).

The film itself displays a marked self-awareness that it is engagingly subversive of an image of African countries as dysfunctional, impoverished and above all technologically backward, that 'embattled placement within the world system' that Gaylard (2005:40) notes motivates a sense of outrage in so many African writers. 'This never gets old,' T'Challa remarks in one of the film's opening scenes, as the Wakandan aircraft enters the force field designed to create the illusion that Wakanda is a half-rural, half wild region, and the screen shimmers to reveal the dazzling skyscrapers and lively bustle of Wakanda. T'Challa's reaction does not really fit with the film's in-world setup; from T'Challa's perspective, Wakanda's dazzle is the norm

and therefore unremarkable. The actor is essentially channelling the *audience's* sense of smug excitement at seeing a vision of Africa that is *not* popularly associated with the advancement and functionality claimed for Wakanda.

The first thing to note about *Black Panther* is that, instead of looking backward to recuperate the possibilities of an African past lost to colonisation, the film's construction asserts a place for its African imagining in fictions of the present. That is, once the quasi-mythical backstory is explained over the film's opening, the entire plot takes place in a recognisably contemporary world. The second noteworthy aspect of Wakanda is its empowering play on the lost world construction popularised by Haggard. Similarly to Kukuanaland, *Black Panther* envisions an alternative history in which isolation from European contact renders it superior to other African states but does so on vastly different terms. Firstly, Wakanda is no historically displaced 'lost world'. Its isolation and secrecy are not due to some accident of geography, but are deliberately maintained by its inhabitants who are fully aware of the outside world and interact freely with it on their own terms. Unlike Haggard's African landscapes in which black peoples are mostly varying features of the spaces where only Europeans cross boundaries and penetrate isolated kingdoms, it is the black rulers of Wakanda that control movement and visibility within Wakanda's borders.

Jelani Cobb (2018) points out the significance of imaginative constructions like Wakanda that gesture at the politics of secondary world constructions in the fantastic:

> Africa—or, rather, 'Africa'—is a creation of a white world and the literary, academic, cinematic, and political mechanisms that it used to give mythology the credibility of truth. No such nation as Wakanda exists on the map of the continent, but that is entirely beside the point. Wakanda is no more or less imaginary than the Africa conjured by Hume or Trevor-Roper,

> or the one canonized in such Hollywood offerings as 'Tarzan.' It is a redemptive counter-mythology.

In my introduction I pointed out that the imaginative geographies of Edward Said's formulation in *Orientalism* evoke the imagined geographies of secondary world fantasy constructions with telling, though accidental, significance. Nowhere in *Orientalism* does Said discuss the pseudo-Oriental kingdom of Calormen in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Horse and his Boy* (Lewis, 1954) or the pseudo-African space of Harad in *The Lord of the Rings*, yet Said's entire thesis defines the root of these imaginings exactly when he describes the way in which the conceptions of real world spaces function primarily as the self-serving imaginings of those in power. Because of the history of European colonization of the Orient (also applicable to Africa), such imaginings have typically been 'a way [for Europeans] of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience' (Said, 2003:1). What the secondary worlds of marvellous fantasy tend to do is simply foreground the imagining, and replicate the othering. Cobb (2018) therefore rightly asserts of *Black Panther*: 'Most filmmakers start by asking their audiences to suspend their disbelief. But, with Africa, Coogler begins with a subject about which the world had suspended its disbelief four centuries before he was born.'

Yet the representations in *Black Panther* have not been without controversy, highlighting the challenges inherent in freeing the imagination from the politics of the past. Patrick Gathara (2018), for example, agues against Cobb's claim for Wakanda as a redemptive counter-mythology:

> Far from offering a 'redemptive counter-mythology,' as Jelani Cobb writes in the New Yorker, the movie trots out many of the same destructive myths about Africans that circulate the globe. At heart, it is a movie about a divided, tribalized continent, discovered by a white man who wants nothing more than to take its mineral resources, a continent run by a wealthy, power-hungry, feuding and feudalist elite, where a nation with the most advanced

> tech and weapons in the world nonetheless has no thinkers to develop systems of transitioning rulership that do not involve lethal combat or coup d'etat.

Cobb's and Gathara's contrasting responses to the film underline the questions that remain deep at the heart of the challenge of creating a positive fantasy representation of Africa: what does a vision of Africa freed from its tumultuous history look like? Are we capable of any representation of Africa that is not tarnished by what the colonial narrative has left behind? These questions generate conversations that need to be had, but it is imperative that such questions become occasions for increased creativity and inspiration, not the wholesale dismissal of positive imaginings in favour of our current fictional climate of postmodern grotesqueries and horrors.

Given the challenges I have highlighted in this thesis, it is unlikely that any attempt to represent a desirable South Africa, or Africa generally, will be perfect either aesthetically or ideologically. For example, *Black Panther*, whilst arguably ideologically empowering, misses opportunities for aesthetic effectiveness. The film, in which the entire plot and thematic substance hinge on the desirability of Wakanda, is actually almost entirely lacking in a plot structure that acquaints its audience with Wakanda as a place. Aside from the flashes of the Wakanda court necessary to propel the plot, the film spends very little time in Wakanda itself.

Nevertheless, South African reviews of *Black Panther* emphasised the welcoming novelty of encountering a positive, desirable representation of what could be South Africa. Zukiswa Wanner (2018) writes:

> After the movie, I found myself walking out with the swagger of Okoye [the female general responsible for the security of Wakanda, played by Danai Gurira.] And that swagger has not left my step. This, perhaps, is why I want

> every boy and every girl who looks like me to watch this movie. Because, at almost 42, it has awoken in me a sense of pride and dignity I had no idea I had lost from all those many years of being erased in international public discourse.

Pondering on the complications of experiencing a similar sense of pride as a white South African, Kyle Zeeman (2018) writes:

> I haven't been to the mountain. I haven't been oppressed. I don't know what it is like to be the only black face in a cinema and see people on screen that don't look like me or speak my language. But I saw something in Marvel's latest superhero film *Black Panther* that made me proud to be an African, I saw myself.

As *The Heart of Redness* shows us, the desire to be in South Africa is the necessary requirement for participation in national healing. What *Black Panther* may have revealed of a vision of Africa to feel proud of when it became the 'highest grossing film in South African history' (Breakfast, 2018) is what Tolkien discovered of the fairy tale more than fifty years ago in Britain: one, that desirable visions of this country need not be anti-intellectual nostalgia for children, and two, that they are visions for 'which a starving audience exists' (in Risden, 2015:134).

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